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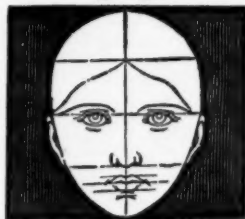
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VOL. XXV.

APRIL, 1910.

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CHAPTER I.



THE fact that much he said because of his unconscionable slang was incomprehensible did not take from the charm of his conversation as far as the Duchess of Breakwater was concerned. The brightness of his expression; his quick, clear look; his beautiful young smile; his not too frequent laugh; his "new gayness," as the duchess called his high spirits; his supernal youth; his *difference* credited him with what nine-tenths of the human race lack—charm.

His tone was not too crudely Western; neither did he suggest the ultra East with which they were familiar. American women went down well enough with them, but American men were unpopular, and, when the visitor arrived, Lady Galorey did not even announce him to the party gathered for "the first shoot."

The others were in the armory when the ninth gun, a young chap, six feet of him, blond as the wheat, cleanly set up, and very good to look at, came in with Lily, Duchess of Breakwater. Lady Galorey, his hostess, greeted them.

"Oh, here you are, are you? Lord Mersey, Sir John Fairthorpe." She mumbled the rest of the names of her companions as though she did not want them understood, then waved toward the young chap, calling him Mr. Dan Blair, and he, as she hesitated, added: "From Blairtown, Montana."

"And give him a gun, will you, Gordon?" Lady Galorey spoke to her husband.

"I discovered Mr. Blair, Edie," the duchess announced, "and he didn't even know there was a shoot on for today. Fancy!"

"I guess," Dan Blair said pleasantly, "I'll just take a gun out of this bunch." And he chose one at random from several indicated to him by the gamekeeper. "I get my best luck when I go it blind. Right! Thanks. That's so, Lady Galorey; I didn't know there was to be any shoot until the duchess let it out."

To himself he thought, with good-natured amusement: "Afraid I'll spoil their game record, I guess!" And he went out along with them, following the insular noblemen like a ray of sun, smiling on the pretty woman who had discovered him in the grounds, where he had been poking about by himself.

"Where, in Heaven's name, did you

'corral'—word of his own—the dear boy, Edith? How did he get to Osdene Park, or, in fact, anywhere, just as he is, fresh as from Eden?"

"Thought I'd let him take you by surprise, dearest. Where'd you find Dan?"

"Down by the garden house feeding the rabbits, on his knees like a little boy, his hands full of lettuces. I've just come a cropper myself on the mare. She fell, I'm sorry to say, Edie, and hacked her knees quite a lot. One of those disguised ditches, you know. I was comin' along leadin' her when I ran upon your friend."

The young duchess was slender as a willow, very brunette, with a beautiful, discontented face.

"I'm goin' to show Dan Blair off," Lady Galorey responded, "goin' to give the débutantes a chance."

Placidly nodding, the duchess lit a cigarette and began to quote from Dan Blair's conversation: "I guess he won't let them 'worry him'; he's too 'busy'!"

"You mean that you're going to keep him occupied?"

The duchess didn't notice this.

"Is he such a catch?"

Lady Galorey had opened an address book, and looked up from it to reply:

"Something like ten million pounds."

"Heavens! Disgusting!"

"The richest young man 'west of some river or other.' At any rate, he told me last night that it was 'clean money.' I dare say the river is responsible for its cleanliness, but that fact seemed to give him satisfaction."

The duchess was leaning on the table at Lady Galorey's side.

"Dan's father took Gordon all over the West that time he went to the States for a big hunt in the Rockies. He got to know Mr. Blair awfully well, and liked him. The old gentleman bought a little property about that time that turned out to be a gold mine."

With persistency, the duchess said:

"How d'you know it is 'clean money,' Edith? Not that it makes a rap of difference"—she laughed prettily—"but how do you know that he is rich to this horrible extent?"

Lady Galorey put down her address book impatiently. "Does he look like an impostor?"

The other returned: "Even the archangel fell, my dear Edith!"

"Well," returned her friend, "this one is too young to have fallen far." And she shut up her list in desperation.

The duchess sat down on the edge of the lounge and raised her expressive eyes to Lady Galorey, who once more looked at her sarcastically, and went on:

"Gordon liked the old gentleman; he was extraordinarily generous—quite a type. They called the town after him—Blairtown; that is where the son 'hails from.' He was a little lad when Gordon was out, and Mr. Blair promised that Dan should come over here and see us one day, and this"—she tapped the table with her pen—"seems to be the day, for he came down upon us in this breezy way, without even sending a wire, just turned up last night! Gordon's mad about him. His father has been dead a year, and he is just of age."

"Good heavens!" murmured the duchess.

Lady Galorey opened her address book again.

"Gordon said that the boy's father treated him like a king, and that while the boy is here he is going to look out for him."

After a little silence, in which the women followed each her own thoughts, the duchess murmured:

"I'll toddle upstairs, Edie—let you write. Where did you say we were going to meet the guns for food?"

"At the gate by the White Pastures. There'll be a cart and a motor going, whichever you like, around two."

"Right," her grace nodded. "I'll be on time, dearest."

And Lady Galorey, with a relieved sigh, heard the door close behind the duchess. Wiping her fountain pen delicately with a bit of chamois, she murmured: "Well, Dan Blair is out of Eden, poor dear, if he met her by the gate."

The young man, dressing for din-

ner in his rooms in the bachelor quarters of Osdene Park House, whistled under his breath a song from a newly popular comic opera; and he intoned, with his clear young voice, a line of the words:

"Should you go to Mandalay."

In Dan Blair's twenty-one years of utterly happy days his one grief had been the death of his father. As soon as the old man had died Dan had gone off into the Rockies with his guides and not "shown up" for months. When he came back to Blairtown, as he expressed it, "he packed his grip and beat it while his shoes were good," for the one place he could remember his father had suggested for him to go.

Blairtown was very much impressed when the heir came in from the Rockies with "a big kill," and the orphan's ease did not seem especially disturbed. But no one in the town knew how the boy's heart ached for the old man. When Dan was six years old his father had literally picked him up by the nape of his neck and thrown him into the water, like a pup, and watched him swim. At eight he sent the boy off with a gun to rough camp. Then he took Dan down in the mines with the men. His education had been made in Blairtown, at a school called public, but which, in reality, was nothing more than a pioneer district school.

On Sundays, Dan dressed up and went with his father to church twice a day, and in the week days his father took him to the prayer meetings, and at sixteen Dan went to college in California. He had just completed his course when old Blair died. Then he inherited ten million pounds.

On the day of the shoot at Osdene, Dan dropped sixty birds. He tried very hard not to be too pleased. "Gosh," he thought to himself, "those birds fell as though they were trained, all right, and the other sports were mad, I could see it."

He then fell to whistling softly the air he had heard Lady Galorey play the night before, and finished it as his toilet completed itself.

He came slowly down the broad stairway of the Osdene Park house, the last guest. In the corner where, behind her, a piece of fourteenth century tapestry cut a green-and-pink square against the rich black oak paneling, the Duchess of Breakwater sat waiting. She wore a dress of golden tulle, which was simply a sheath to her slender body, and from her neck hung a long rope of diamonds, caught at the end by a small black fan; there was a wreath of diamonds like shining water drops linked together in her hair. She was the grandest lady at Osdene, and renowned in more than one sense of the word. As Dan saw her smile at him and rise, he thought:

"She is none too sorry that I made *that* record, but I hope to Heaven she won't say anything to me about it."

And the duchess did not speak of it. Telling him that he was to take her in to dinner, she laid first her fan on his arm and then her hand. And Dan, one of those fortunate creatures who are born men of the world when they get into it, gave her his arm with much grace, and as he leaned down toward her he thought to himself:

"Well, it's lucky for me I have my head on tight; a few more of those goo-goo eyes of hers, and it would be as well for me to light out for the woods."

Dan liked best at Osdene Park his talks with Gordon Galorey. The young man was unflatteringly frank in his choice of companions. When the duchess looked about for him to ride with her, walk with her, to find the secluded corners, to talk, to play with him, she was likely to discover Dan gone off with Lord Galorey, and to come upon them later, sitting enveloped in smoke, a stand of drinks by their side.

To Galorey, who had no heir or child, the boy's presence proved to be the happiest thing for him that had come upon him for a long time. He talked a great deal to Dan about the old man. Galorey was poor, and the fact of a fortune of ten million pounds

possessed by this one boy was continually before his mind, like an obsession. It was like looking down into a gold mine. Galorey tried often to broach the subject of money, but Dan kept off. At length, Galorey asked boldly:

"What are you going to do with it?"

On this occasion they were walking over from the lower park back to the house, a couple of terriers at their heels.

"Do with what?" Blair asked innocently. He was looking at the trees. He was comparing their grayish green trunks and their foliage with the California redwoods. A little taken aback, Lord Galorey laughed.

"Why, with the colossal fortune of yours."

And Blair answered unhesitatingly: "Oh—spend it on some girl, sooner or later."

Galorey fairly staggered. Then he took it humorously.

"My dear chap, I never saw a sweeter, bigger man than your father. If he had been my father, I dare say I might have pulled off a different yard of hemp, but I must confess that I think he has left you too much money."

"Well, there are a lot of fellows who are ready to look after it for me," Blair answered coolly. Before his companion could redden, he continued: "You see, dad took care of me for twenty-odd years all right, and whenever I am up a stump, why, all I have to do is to remember the things he did."

For the first time since his arrival at Osdene, Dan's tone was serious. Interested as he was in the older man, Dan's inclination was to evade the discussion of serious subjects.

"Dad didn't gas much," the boy said, "but I could draw a map of some of the things he did say. He used to say he made his money out of the earth."

The two were walking side by side across the rich velvet of the immemorial English turf. The extreme softness of the autumn day, its shifting lights, its mellow envelope, the beauty of the park—the age, the stability, the

harmony and beauty, served to touch the young fellow's spirits. At any rate, there was a ring in him, an equilibrium that surprised Galorey.

"'Most things,' dad said to me, 'go back to the earth.' He struck the English turf with his stick. 'Dad said a fellow had better buy those things that stay above the ground.' Dan smiled frankly at his companion. 'Curious thing to say, wasn't it?' he reflected. 'I remembered it, and I got to wondering, after I saw him buried, *what are* the things that stay above the ground? The old man never gave me another talk like that.'

After a few seconds, Galorey put in:

"But, my dear chap, you did give me a shock up there just now when you said you were going to spend 'all your money on some girl.'"

"I like girls awfully, Gordon, and when I find the right one, why, then, I'm going to feel what a bully thing it is to be rich."

Lord Galorey groaned aloud.

"My dear chap!" he exclaimed.

The spell of the day, the fragrant beauty of the time and place and hour were clearly upon Dan Blair.

He said slowly: "It must be bully to feel that a fellow can give her jewels like the Duchess of Breakwater's, ropes of 'em." He nodded toward the house. "And a fine old place like this, now, and motors, and yachts, and all kinds of stuff."

His eyes rested on the suave lines of the Elizabethan house, with its softened gables and its banked terraces. Possibly his vivid imagination pictured "some nice girl" there waiting, as they should come up, to meet him.

"I have always thought it would be bully to find a poor girl—pretty as a peach, of course—one who had never had much, and just cover her with things."

They had come up to the terrace by this, and Dan's confidence, fresh as a gush of water from a rock, had ceased.

From out of one of the long windows, dressed in a sable coat, her small head tied up in a motor scarf, the

Duchess of Breakwater appeared. She greeted them severely, and Lord Galorey heard her say, under her breath, to Dan:

"You promised to be back to drive with me before dinner, Dan. Did you forget?"

And as Galorey left the boy to make his peace, the first smile of amusement broke over his face. He felt that the Duchess of Breakwater had between her and her capture of Dan Blair's heart and fortune the elusive picture of some "nice girl"—not much, perhaps, but it might be very hard to tear the picture of the ideal down, this ideal which stood before the blue eyes of the man who had his ten million pounds to spend on her!

CHAPTER II.

His attentions to the Duchess of Breakwater had not been so conspicuous or so absorbing as to prevent the eager mothers—who, true to her word, Lady Galorey had invited down—from laying siege to Dan Blair. Lady Galorey asked him:

"Don't you want to marry any one of these beauties, Dan?"

And Blair, with his beautiful smile, and what Lily called his inspired candor, answered: "Not on your life, Lady Galorey!"

And she agreed: "I think myself you are too young."

"No," Dan refuted, "you are wrong there. I shall marry as fast as I can."

His hostess was surprised.

"Why, I thought you wanted your fling first."

Dan, from his chair, in which, with a book, he had been sitting when Lady Galorey found him, answered cheerfully:

"Oh, I don't like being alone. I want to go about with some one. I would like a fling, all right, but I want to fling with somebody as I go."

She laughed. "You're perfectly delicious! You mean to say you want to be married at once and let your wife fling around with you?"

"Just that."

"How sweet of you, Dan! And you won't marry one of these girls here?"

"Don't fill the bill, Lady Galorey."

"Oh, you have got a sweetheart at home, then?"

"All off!" he assured her blithely, and rose, tall and straight and slender.

The Duchess of Breakwater had come in; indeed she never failed to when there was any question of finding Blair.

Dan stood straightly before the two women of an old race, and the American didn't suggest any line of noble ancestors whatsoever. His features were rather agglomerate; his muscles were possibly not the perfect elastic specimens that were those muscles whose strain and sinew had been made from the same stock for generations. He was, nevertheless, very good to look upon. Any woman would have thought so, and he bent his blond head as he looked at the Duchess of Breakwater with something like benevolence, something of his father's kindness in his clear blue eyes. Neither of the noble ladies understood him. His hostess thought him "a good sort," not half bad, a splendid catch, and the other woman, only a year or so his senior, was in love with him. The duchess had married at eighteen, tired of her bargain at twenty, and found herself a widow at twenty-five. She held a telegram in her hand.

"We've got the box for 'Mandalay' to-night at the Gaiety, and let's motor in."

Only Lady Galorey hesitated, disappointed.

"Too bad—I had specially arranged for Lady Grandcourt to drive over with Eileen. I thought it would be a ripping chance for her to see Dan."

When at length the duchess succeeded in getting Dan to herself toward the end of the day in the red room, after tea, she said:

"So you won't marry a London beauty?"

And rather coldly, Dan said:

"Why, you talk, all of you, as if I had only to ask any girl of them, and she would jump down my throat."

"Don't try it," the duchess answered, "unless you want to have your mouth full!"

Dan did not reply for a second, but he looked at her more seriously, conscious of her grace and her good looks. She was certainly better to look at than the simple girls with big hands, small wits, long faces, and, as the boy expressed it, "utter lack of style." The duchess shone out to advantage.

"Why don't you talk to me?" she asked softly. "You know you would rather talk to me than the others."

"Yes," he said frankly, "they make me nervous."

"And I don't?"

"No," he said, "I learn a lot every time we have been together."

"Learn!" she repeated, not particularly flattered by this. "What sort of things?"

"Oh, about the whole business," he returned vaguely. "You know what I mean."

"Then," she said, with a slight laugh, "you mean to say you stay with me for *educational purposes*? What a beastly bore!"

Dan did not contradict her. She was by no means Eve to him, nor was he the raw recruit his simplicity might give one to think. He had had his temptations, and his way out of them was an easy one; for he was very slow to stir, and back of all was "his ideal." The reality and power of this ideal Dan knew best at moments like these. But the Duchess of Breakwater was the most lovely woman—the most dangerous woman that had come his way. He liked her—Dan was well on the way to love.

The two were alone in the big dark room. At their side the small table, from which they had taken their tea together, stood with its empty cups and its silver. Without, the day was cold and windy, and the sunset threw along the panes a red reflection. The light fell on the Duchess of Breakwater, something like a veil—a crimson veil—slipped over her face and breast. She leaned toward Dan, and between them there was no more barrier than the

western light. He felt his pulses beat and a rising tide within him. She was a delicious emanation, fragrant and near, and as he might have gathered a cluster of flowers, so in the next second he would have taken her in his arms, but from the other room just then Lady Galorey, at the piano, played a snatch from "Mandalay," striking suddenly into the tune. The sound came suddenly, told them quickly some one was near, and the Duchess of Breakwater involuntarily moved back, and so knocked the small tray, jostled it, and it fell clattering to the floor.

CHAPTER III.

Blairtown had a population of some eight thousand. There was a Presbyterian church, to which Dan and his father went regularly, sitting in the bare pew when the winter's storms beat and rattled on the panes, or in the summer sunshine, when the flies thronged the window casings, when the smell of the pews and the panama fans and the hymn books came strong in to him through the heat.

One day there was a missionary sermon, and, for the first time in its history, a girl sang a solo in the First Presbyterian Church. Dan Blair heard it, looked up, and it made a mark in his life. A girl in a white dress, trimmed with blue gentians, white cotton gloves, and golden hair, was the soloist. He knew her; that is, he had a nodding acquaintance with her. It was the girl at the drug store who sold soda water, and he had asked her some hundreds of times for a "vanilla or a chocolate," but it wasn't this vulgar memory that made the little boy listen. It was the girl's voice. Standing back of the yellow-painted rail, above the minister's pulpit, above the flies, the red pews, and the panama fans, she sang; and she sang into Dan Blair's soul. To speak more truly, she made him a soul in that moment. She awakened the boy; his collar felt tight, his cheeks grew hot. He felt his new boots, too, hard and heavy. She made him want to cry. These were the

physical sensations—the material part of the awakening. The rest went on deeply inside of Dan. She broke his heart; then she healed it. She made him want to bawl like a girl; then she wiped his tears.

The little boy settled back and grew more comfortable, and listened. And what she sang was:

"From Greenland's icy mountains,
From India's coral strands."

Before the hymn reached its end he was a calm boy again, and the hymn took up its pictures and became like an illustrated book of travels, and he wanted to see those pea-green peaks of Greenland, to float upon the icebergs to them, and see the dawn break on the polar seas, as the explorers do. He should find the North Pole some day! Then he wanted to go to an African jungle, where the tiger, "tiger shining bright," should flash his stripes before his eyes. Dan would gather wreaths of coral from the strands and give them to the girl with the yellow hair!

When his father and himself came out together from the church, Dan chose the street that passed the soda-fountain drug store, and peeped in. It was dark and cool, and behind the counter the drug clerk mixed the summer drinks; and the drug clerk mixed them from that time ever afterward—for the girl with the yellow hair never showed up in Blairtown again. She went away!

CHAPTER IV.

"Mandalay" had run at the Gaiety the season before, and again opened the autumn season. Light and charming, thoroughly musical, it had toured successfully through Europe, but London was its home, and its great popularity was chiefly owing to the girl who had starred in it—Letty Lane. Her face was on every post card, hand bill, cosmetic box; and even popular drinks were named for her.

The night of the Osdene box party was the reopening of "Mandalay," and the curtain went up after the overture

to an outburst of applause. Dan Blair had never "crossed the pond" before this memorable visit, when he had gone straight out to Osdene Park. London theatres and London itself, indeed, were unexplored by him. He had seen what there was to be seen of the *opéra bouffe* in his own country, but the brilliant, perfect performance of a company of the London Gaiety he had yet to enjoy.

He had grown years older at the park in the few weeks of his visit, but now, for the first time, as the music of "Mandalay" struck upon his ears, like a ripple of distant seas, he felt like the chap who had left Blairtown to come abroad. He had spent the most part of the day at London with a man who had come over to see him from America. Dan attended to his business affairs, and the people who knew said that he had a keen head.

Mr. Joshua Ruggles, his father's best friend, whom Dan this afternoon had left to go to his room at the Carlton, had put his arm, with affection, through the boy's.

"Don't look as though it were any too healthy down to the place you're visiting at, Dan. Drains all right?"

And the boy, flushing slightly, had said: "Don't you fret, Josh, I'll look after my health, all right."

"There's nothing like the mountain air," returned the Westerner. "These old fogs stick in my nostrils; feel as though I could smell London clean down to my feet!"

From the corner of the box, Dan looked hard at the stage, at the fresh, brilliant costumes, and the lovely chorus girls.

"Gosh," he thought to himself, "they are the prettiest ever!" Dove gray, eyes of Irish blue, mouths like roses.

Leaning forward a little toward the duchess, he whispered: "There isn't one who isn't a winner. I never struck such a box of goods!"

The duchess smiled on Dan with good humor. His naive pleasure was delightful. It was like taking a child to a pantomime. She was wearing his

flowers and displaying a jewel which he had found and bought for her, and which she had not hesitated to accept. She watched his eager face and his pleasure unaffected and keen. She could not believe that this young man was master of ten million pounds.

When Letty Lane appeared, Blair heard a light rustle, like rain, through the auditorium, a murmur, and the house arose. There was a well-bred calling from the stalls, a call from the pit, and a generous applause. "Letty Lane! Letty Lane!" And, as though she were royalty, there was a fluttering of handkerchiefs like flags, and the young fellow, with the others, stood in the back of the box, his hands in his pockets, looking at the stage. There wasn't a girl in the chorus as pretty as this prima donna. Letty Lane came on in "Mandalay" in the first act in the dress of a fashionable princess. She was modish and worldly. For the only time in the play she was modern and conventional, and whatever breeding she might have been able to claim, from whatever class she was born, as she stood there in her beautiful gown she was grace itself, and charm. She was distinctly a star, and showed her appreciation of her audience's admiration.

At the end of the tenor solo, the *Princess Oltary* runs into the pavilion, and there changes her dress, and appears once more to dance before the *Rajah*, and to prove herself the dancer he has known and loved in a café in Paris. Letty Lane's dress in this dance was the classic ballet dancer's, white as the leaves of a lily. She seemed to swim and float; actually to be breathed and exhaled from out of her filmy gown; and the only ray of color in her costume was her own golden hair, surmounted by a small coral-colored cap, embroidered in pearls. The actress bowed to the right and left, ran to the right, ran to the left; glanced toward the Duchess of Breakwater's box; acknowledged the burst of applause, began to dance, and finished her pas seul, and with folded hands sang her song. Her beautiful voice came out

clear as crystal water from a crystal rock.

"From India's coral strand."

But there was no hymn tune to this song of Letty Lane's in "Mandalay." To the boy in the box, however, the words, the tune, the droning of the flies on the window pane, the strong odor of the hymn books and panama fans, came back, and the clear sunlight of Montana seemed to steal into the Gaiety as Letty Lane sang.

The Duchess of Breakwater applauded with frank enthusiasm, and said: "She is a perfect wonder, isn't she? Oh, she is *too* bewitching!"

And she turned for sympathy to her friend, who stood behind her, his face illumined. He was amazed; his blue eyes ablaze, his head bent forward, he was staring, staring at the Gaiety curtain, gone down on the first act.

He laughed softly, and the duchess heard him say:

"Good! Well, I should say she was! She's a girl from our town!"

When the duchess tried to share her enthusiasm with Dan, he had disappeared. He left the box, and with no difficulty made his way as far as the stage door.

"Can you get me an entrance?" he asked a man he had met once at Osdene, and who was evidently an habitu .

"I dare say. Rippin' show, isn't it?"

Dan put his hand on ducal shoulders and followed the nobleman through the labyrinth of scenery.

"Which of 'em do you want to see, old man?"

Dan, without replying, went forward to a small cluster of lights in one of the wings. He went forward intuitively, and his companion caught his arm.

"Oh, I say, don't go on like this!"

But, without response, Dan continued his direction. A callboy stood before the door, and Dan, on a card over the little door, read: "Miss Lane." The smell of calcium and paint and perfume and the auxiliaries hung heavy on the air. The other man saw Dan knock, knock again, and then go in.

Unannounced, Dan Blair opened the door of the dressing room of the actress. Miss Lane's dressing rooms were worth displaying to her intimate friends. They were done with great taste in coral tint. She might have been said to be in a coral cave under the sea, as far as young Blair was concerned. The dancer was standing in the centre of the room, one hand on her hip, and in the other hand a cigarette. Her short skirt stood out around her like a bell, and over the bell fell a rain of pinkish coral strands. She wore a thin silk slip, from which her neck and arms came shining out, and her woman knelt at her feet, strapping on a little coral shoe.

Blair shut the door behind him, and began to realize how rude, how impertinent his entrance would be considered. But he came boldly forward and would have introduced himself as "Dan Blair from Blairtown," but Miss Lane, who stared at the entrance through the smoke, burst into a laugh so bright, so delightful, that he was carried high up on the coral strands to the very beach. She crossed her white arms over her breast and leaned forward, as a saleswoman might lean forward over a counter, and with her beautiful trained voice, all sweetly she asked him:

"Hello, little boy, what will you take?"

Blair giggled, quick to catch her meaning, and answered: "Oh, chocolate, I guess!"

Letty Lane laughed, put out her white hand, the one without the cigarette, and said: "Haven't got that brand on board—so sorry! Will a cocktail do? All sorts in bottles. Higgins, fix Mr. Blair a Martini."

And as the dresser rose from her stooping position, the rest of Letty Lane's dressing room unfolded out of the mist and smoke. "On a sofa covered with lace pillows, Blair saw a man sitting, smoking as well. He was tall and had a dark mustache. It was Prince Poniotowsky, whom Dan had already met at the Galorey shoot.

"Prince Poniotowsky"—Miss Lane

presented him—"Mr. Blair, of Blairtown, Montana. Say, Frederigo, give me my cap, will you? It is over by your side. I've got to hustle."

The man, without moving, picked up a small red cap with a single plume from the sofa at his side. In another second Letty Lane had placed it on her head of yellow hair, real yellow hair, and not a doubt of it, sunshine like—not the color one gets from inside bottles. Her arms, her hands flashed with rings, priceless flashes, and the little spears pricked Dan like sharp needles.

"It's the nicest ever!" she was saying. "How on earth did you get in here, though? Have you bought the Gaiety Theatre? I'm the most exclusive girl on the stage. Who let you in?"

Her accent was English, and even that put her from him. As he looked at her he couldn't understand how he had ever recognized her. If he had waited for another act he wouldn't have believed the likeness real. The girl he remembered had both softened and hardened; the round features were gone, but all the angles were gone as well. Her eyes were as gray as the seas; she was painted and her lids were darkened. Seen close to, she was not so divine as on the stage, but there was still a more thrilling charm about the fact that she was real.

"To think of any one from Montana here to-night! Staying very long, Mr. Blair?" Between each sentence she directed Higgins, who was getting her into her bodice. "And how do you like 'Mandalay'? Isn't it great?"

She addressed herself to Dan, but she smiled on both the men with extreme brilliance.

"You bet your life," he responded. "I should think it was great."

Poniotowsky rose indolently. He had not looked toward the newcomer, but had, on the other hand, followed every detail of Miss Lane's dressing.

"Better take your scarf, Letty. Hand it to Miss Lane," he directed Higgins. "It is so damned draughty in these beastly wings."

He drew his watch out, picked up his long coat, flung it over his arm, and took up his opera hat, which lay folded on Letty Lane's dressing table.

The callboy, for the third time, summoned "Miss La—ne, Miss La—ane!" and she took the scarf Higgins handed her and ran it through her hands, still beaming on Dan.

"Come in to see me at the Savoy on any day, at two-thirty, except on matinee days."

"Put on your scarf." Poniotowsky, taking it from her hands, laid it across her shoulders, and she passed out between the two, light as a bird, smiling, nodding, followed by the two men. The crowds began to fill the lately empty wings—dancers, chorus girls, with their rustling gowns.

Letty Lane said to Dan:

"Guess you'll like my solo in this act all right—it's the best thing in 'Mandalay.' Now go along, and *clap me hard*."

It gave him a new pleasure, for she had spoken to him in real American fashion, with the swift mimicry that showed her talent. Dan went slowly back to his party. As he took his seat by the duchess, she said to him:

"You went out to see Letty Lane. Do you know her?"

"Know her!" And as Dan answered the sound of his own voice was queer to him, and his face flushed hotly. "Lord, yes. She used to be in the drug store in Blaiertown; sold soda water to me when I was a little kid. Whoever would have thought that she had that in her!" He nodded toward the stage, for Letty Lane had come on. "She sang in our church, too, but not for long."

"Who was with her in her dressing rooms?" the duchess asked.

Blair didn't answer. He was looking at Letty Lane. She had come to dance for the *Rajah*, and in her arms she held four white doves; each dove had a coral thread around its throat. It was a number that made her famous, "The Dove Song." Set free, the birds flew about her, circling her blonde head, surmounted by the small,

coral-colored cap. The doves settled on her shoulders, pecked at her lips.

"Was it Poniotowsky?" the duchess repeated.

And Dan told her a meaningless lie. "I didn't meet any one there."

With satisfaction, the duchess said:

"Then she has thrown him over, too. He was the latest and the richest. She is horribly extravagant. No man is rich enough for her, they say. Poniotowsky isn't a gold mine."

The doves had flown away to the wings and been gathered up by the Indian servants. The actress on the stage began her Indian cradle song. She came forward, distinctly turning toward the box party. She had never sung like this in London before. There were a freshness in her voice, a quality in her gesture, a pathos, and a sweetness that delighted her audience. They fairly clamored for her, waved and called and recalled. Dan stood motionless, his eyes fastened on her, his heart rocked by the song. He didn't want any one to speak to him. He wished that none of them would breathe; and, nearly as absorbed as he was, no one did speak.

CHAPTER V.

There are certain natures to whom each appearance of evil, each form of delinquency, is a fresh surprise. They are born simple, in the sweet sense of the word, and they go down to old age never of the world, although in a sense worldly. If Dan Blair's eyes were somewhat opened at twenty-two, he had yet the bloom upon his soul. He was no fool, but his ideals stood up each on its pedestal and ready to appear one by one to him as the scenes of his life shifted and the different curtains arose. He had been trained in finance from his boyhood and he was a born financier. Money was his natural element; he could go far in it. But *Woman!* He was one of those manly creatures—a knight—to whom each woman is a sacred thing; a dove, a crystal-clear soul, made to cherish and to protect, made to be spoiled. And

in Dan were all the qualities that go to make up the unselfish, tender, foolish, and often unhappy, American husband.

In the time that he had come to know the Duchess of Breakwater she had filled him full of confidences. Into his young ears she poured the story of her disappointment, her disjointed life, from her worldly girlhood to her disillusion in marriage. She was beautiful when she talked and more lovely when she wept. Dan thought himself in love with the Duchess of Breakwater. His conversations with her had brought him to this conclusion. They had motored from Osdene Park together, and he had been extremely taken with the pleasure of it, and with the fact of their dual companionship. Two or three times the words had been on his lips, which were fated not to be spoken then, however, and Dan reached the Gaiety still unfettered, his duchess by his side. And then the orchestra had begun to play "Mandalay," the curtain had gone up, and Letty Lane had come out upon the boards. But her apparition did not strike off his chains immediately, nor did he renounce his plan to tell the duchess the very next day that he loved her.

They went for supper at the Carlton after the theatre.

"Letty," Lady Galorey said, "tells it herself, how the impresario heard her sing in some country church—picked her up then and there, and brought her over here, and they say she married him."

Dan Blair could have told them how she had sung in that little church that day. Dan was eating his caviare sandwich. "Her name *then* was Sally Towney," he murmured. How little he had guessed that she was singing herself right out of that church and into the London Gaiety Theatre! Anyway, she had made him "sit up"! It was a far cry from Montana to the London Gaiety. And so she married the greasy manager who had discovered her!

Dan glanced over at the Duchess of Breakwater. She was looking well, exquisitely high bred, and she impressed

him. She leaned slightly over to him, laughing. He had hardly dared to meet her eyes that day, fearing that she might read his secret. She had told him that in her own right she was a countess—the Countess of Stainer. Titles didn't cut any ice with him. At any rate, she would be able to "buy back the old farm"—that is the way Dan put it. She had told him of the beautiful old Stainer Court, mortgaged and hung up with debts, deep in ruins as the ivy was thick on the walls.

As Dan looked over at the duchess he saw the other people staring and looking about at a table near. It was spread a little to their left, for four people, a great bouquet of orchids in the centre.

"There," Galorey said, "there's Letty Lane."

And the fair actress came in, followed by three men, the first of them, the Prince Poniotowsky, indolent, bored, haughty, his eyeglass dangling. Miss Lane was dressed in black, a superb costume of faultless cut, and it enfolded her like a shadow; for the actress was as pale as the dead. She had neither painted nor rouged; she had evidently employed no coquetry to disguise her weariness; rather, she seemed to be on the verge of a serious illness, and presented a striking contrast to the brilliant, birdlike creature, who, half unclothed and wholly bold, had shone before their eyes not an hour before. Her dress was a challenge to the more gay and delicate affairs the other women in the restaurant wore. The gown came severely up to her chin. Its high collar was closed around with a pearl necklace; from her ears fell pearls, long, creamy, and priceless. She wore a great feathered hat, which, drooping, almost hid her small, pale face and her golden hair. She drew off her gloves as she came in, and her white, jeweled hands flashed. She looked infinitely tired and extremely bored. As soon as she took her seat at the table intended for her party, Poniotowsky poured her out a glass of champagne, which she drank off as though it were water.

"Gad," Lord Galorey said, "she is a stunner! What a figure, and what a head, and what daring to dress like that!"

"She knows how to make herself conspicuous," said the Duchess of Breakwater.

"She looks extremely ill," said Lady Galorey. "The pace she goes will do her up in a year or two."

Dan Blair had his back to her, and when they rose to leave he was the last to pass out. Letty Lane saw him, and a light broke over her pallid face. She nodded and smiled and shook her hand in a pretty little salute. If her face was pale, her lips were red, and her smile was like sunlight; and at her recognition a wave of friendly fellowship swept over the young man—a sort of loyal kinship to her which he hadn't felt for any other woman there, and which he could not have explained. In warm approval of the singer's distinction, he said softly to himself: "*That's* all right—she makes the rest of them look like thirty cents."

CHAPTER VI.

Blair did not go back at once to Osdene Park. He stopped over in London for a few days to see Joshua Ruggles.

Old Mr. Blair had left behind him a comrade, and as far as advice should go the old man knew that his Dan would not be bankrupt.

During Ruggles' stay in London the young fellow looked to it that Ruggles saw the sights, and the two did the principal features of the big town, to the rich enjoyment of the Westerner. Dan took his friend every night to the play, and on the fourth evening Ruggles said: "Let's go to the circus or a vaudeville, Dan. I have learned *this* show by heart!" They had been every night to see "Mandalay."

"Oh, you go on where you like, Josh," the boy answered. "I'm going to see how she looks from the pit."

Ruggles was not a Blairtown man. He had come from farther West, and had never heard anything of Sarah

Towney or Letty Lane. He applauded the actress vigorously at the Gaiety at first, and after the third night slept through most of the performance. When he waked up, he tried to discover what attraction Letty Lane had for Dan. For the young man never left Ruggles' side, never went behind the scenes, though he seemed absorbed, as a man usually is absorbed for one reason alone.

In response to a telegram from Osdene Park, Dan motored out there one afternoon, and during his absence Ruggles was surprised at his hotel by a call.

"My dear Mr. Ruggles," Lord Galorey said, for he it was the page boy fetched up, "why don't you come out to see us at the park? All friends of old Mr. Blair's are welcome at Osdene."

Ruggles thanked Galorey and said he was not a visiting man, that he only had a short time in London, and was going to Ireland to look up "his family tree."

Ruggles' caller had been shown to the sitting room, where he and Dan hobnobbed and smoked during the Westerner's visit. There was a pile of papers upon the table; in one corner a typewriter, covered by a black cloth. Galorey took a chair, and, refusing a cigarette, lit his pipe.

"I didn't have the pleasure of meeting you in the West when I was out there with Blair. I knew Dan's father rather well."

Ruggles responded: "I knew him rather well, too, for thirty years. If," he went on, "Blair hadn't known you pretty well he wouldn't have sent the boy out to you, as he has done. He was keen on every trail. I might say that he had been over every one of 'em like a hound before he set the boy loose."

Galorey answered, "Quite so," gravely. "I know it. I knew it when Dan turned up at Osdene."

Holding his pipe bowl in the palm of his slender hand, he smoked meditatively. He hadn't thought about things as he had been doing lately for many years. His sense of honor was the

strongest thing in Gordon Galorey, the only thing in him, perhaps, that had been left unsmirched by the touch of the world. He was unquestionably a gentleman.

"Blair, however," he said, "doesn't seem as keen on this scent as one would expect. His intuition was wrong."

Ruggles raised his eyebrows slightly.

"I mean to say," Lord Galorey went on, "that he knew me in the West when I had cut loose for a few blessed months from just these things into which he has sent his boy; from what, if I had a son, God knows I'd throw him as far as I could."

"Blair" wanted Dan to see the world."

"Of course, that is right enough. We all have to see it, I fancy, but this boy isn't ready to look at it."

"He is twenty-two," Ruggles returned. "When I was his age I was supporting four people."

Galorey went on: "Osdene Park at present isn't the window for Blair's boy to see life through, and that is what I have come up to London to talk to you about, Mr. Ruggles. I should like to have you take him away."

"What's Dan been up to down there?"

"Nothing as yet, but he is in the pocket of a woman," answered Galorey, coming straight to the point. "The Duchess of Breakwater has been at Osdene for nearly three weeks, and Dan is in love with her."

Ruggles looked up quickly.

"Is the lady a widow?"

"Unfortunately, yes."

"And he has gone out there to-day—got a wire this morning."

"The duchess has been in an awful funk," said Galorey, "because Dan's been stopping in London so long. She sent him a message, and, as soon as Dan wired back that he was coming to the park, I decided to see you."

Ruggles ruminated: "Has the duchess complications financially?"

"Ra-ther!" the other answered.

And Ruggles turned his broad, honest face full on Galorey. "Do you think she could be brought off?"

Galorey took his pipe out of his mouth.

"It depends how far Dan has gone on with her. To be frank with you, Mr. Ruggles, it is a case of emotion on the part of the woman. She is really in love with Dan. Gad!" exclaimed the nobleman. "I have been on the point of turning the whole brood out of doors these last days. It was like imprisoning a mountain breeze in a charnel house—a woman with her scars and her experience and that boy—I don't know where you've kept him or how you kept him as he is, but he is as clear as water. I have talked to him, and I know."

Nothing in Ruggles' expression had changed until now. His eyes glowed.

"Dan's all right," he said softly.

"Don't you worry! He's all right. I guess his father knew what he was doing, and I'll bet the whole thing was just what he sent him over here for! Old Dan Blair wasn't worth a copper when the boy was born, and yet he had ideas about everything, and he seemed to know more in that old gray head of his than a whole library of books. Dan's all right."

"My dear man," said the nobleman, "that is just where you Americans are wrong. You comfort yourself with your eternal 'Dan's all right,' and you won't see the truth. You won't breathe the word 'scandal,' and yet you are thick enough in them, God knows. You won't admit them, but they are there. Now be honest and look at the truth, will you? You are a man of common sense. Dan Blair is *not* all right. He is in an infernally dangerous position. The Duchess of Breakwater will marry him. It is what she has wanted to do for years, but she has not found a man rich enough, and she will marry this boy offhand."

"Well," said the Westerner slowly, "if he loves her, and if he marries her, why—"

"Marries her!" exclaimed the nobleman. "There you are again! You think marriage makes it any better? Why, if she went off to the Continent with him for six weeks, and then set

him free, that would be preferable to marrying her. My dear man," he said, leaning over the table where Ruggles sat, "if I had a boy, I would rather have him marry Letty Lane of the Gaiety. Now you know what I mean."

Ruggles' face, which had hardened, relaxed.

"I have seen that lady," he exclaimed, with satisfaction. "I have seen her several times."

Galorey sank back into his chair, and neither man spoke for a few seconds. Turning it all over in his slow mind, Ruggles remembered Dan's absorption in the last few days. "So there are two women in the case," he concluded thoughtfully, and Gordon Galorey repeated:

"No, not two. What do you mean?"

"I'll take care of Miss Lane," Ruggles said.

His lordship echoed: "Miss Lane?" and looked up in surprise. "What Miss Lane, for Heaven's sake?"

"Miss Letty Lane at the Gaiety," Ruggles answered.

"Why, she isn't in the question, my dear man."

"You put her there just now yourself."

"Bosh!" Galorey exclaimed impatiently. "I spoke of her as being the limit, the last thing on the line."

"No, you put the Duchess of Breakwater as the limit."

Galorey smiled frankly. "You are right, my dear chap," he accepted, "and I stand by it."

As soon as Galorey had left the Carlton, Mr. Ruggles made a very careful toilet, and, after waiting until after eight o'clock for Dan to return to dinner, dined alone on roast beef and a tart, and, with perfect digestion, if somewhat thoughtful mind, left the hotel and walked down the dim street to the Gaiety.

CHAPTER VII.

Dan Blair had not been in Letty Lane's dressing room since his first call on the singer. Indeed, he had not been able to approach her very closely, even in his own thoughts. When she first

appeared on his horizon, his mind was full of the Duchess of Breakwater, and the actress had only hovered round his more profound feelings for another woman. But Letty Lane was an atmosphere in Dan's mind which he was not yet able to understand. There was so little left that was connected with his old home, certainly nothing in the British Isles, excepting Ruggles; and to the young man everything from America had its value. Decidedly, the nice girl of whom he had spoken to Gordon Galorey, the print-frocked, sun-bonnet type, the ideal girl that Dan would like to marry and to spoil, had not crossed his path. The Duchess of Breakwater did not suggest her, nor did any of the London beauties. Dan's first ideal was beginning to fade.

He had left Osdene Park on protest and returned the same night to London, and all the way back to town tried to register in his mind, unused to analysis, his experience with the Duchess of Breakwater on this last visit.

He had spoken of Letty Lane to the duchess, expressed the pity he felt for her; and, in his ingenuousness, had actually asked the duchess to help her in some way or other. But the duchess had laughed him to scorn; had told him that, if he were not such a "hopeless child," she would be furious with him.

He had experienced his first disappointment in the sex, and this disappointment had been of an unusual kind. It was not that he had been turned down or given the mitten, but he had seen one woman turn another down. "A woman had been mean," so he put it, and the fact that the Duchess of Breakwater had refused to lend a moral hand to the singer at the Gaiety hurt Dan's feelings. Then, as soon as his enthusiasm had calmed, he saw what a stupid ass he had been. A duchess couldn't mix up with a comic-opera singer, of course. "Still," he mused, "she might have been a little nicer about it."

That evening, once more in the box, he listened to "Mandalay"; carried

away with the charm of the music and carried away by the singer. He was in the box close to the stage and seemed close to her, and he imagined that under her paint he could see her pallor and how thin she was. Nothing, however, in her acting or in her voice revealed the least fatigue.

Blair had obtained a card of entrance to the theatre, which permitted him to circulate freely behind the scenes, and although as yet the run of his visits had not been clear, this night he had a purpose. Dan stood not far from the corridor that led to Letty Lane's room, and saw her after her act hurriedly cross the stage, a big white shawl wrapping her slender form closely. Her woman Higgins followed after her, and as they passed Dan, Letty Lane called:

"Hello, you! What are you hanging around here for?"

And Dan returned: "Don't stand here in the draught. It is beastly cold."

"Yes, miss," her woman urged, "don't stand here."

But the actress waited, nevertheless, and said to Dan: "Who's the girl?"

"What girl?"

"Why, the girl you come here every night to see, and are too shy to speak to. Everybody is crazy to know."

Letty Lane looked like a little girl herself in the crocheted garment her small hands held across her breast. Dan put his arm on her shoulder without realizing the familiarity of his gesture.

"Get out of this draught—get out of it quick, I say." And he pushed her toward her room.

"Gracious, but you are strong!" She felt the muscular touch, and his hand flat against her shoulder was warm through the wool.

"I wish you were strong. You work too darned hard."

Her head was covered with the coral cap and feather. Dan saw her billowy skirt, her silken hose, her little coral shoes. She fluttered at the door, which Higgins opened.

"Why haven't you been to see me?" she asked him.

"I am coming in now."

"Not a bit of it. I'm too busy, and it is a short entr'acte. Go and see the girl you came here to see."

Dan thought that the reason she forbade him to come in was because the Prince Poniotowsky waited for her in her dressing room. It was his first jealous moment, and the feeling fell upon him with a swoop, and its fangs fastened in him with a stinging pain. He stammered:

"I didn't come to see any girl here but you. I came to see you."

"Come to-morrow at two, at the Savoy."

But before Dan realized his own precipitation, he had seized the door handle as Letty Lane went within and was about to close her room against him, and said quickly:

"I'm coming right in now."

"Why, I never heard of such a thing," she answered sharply, angrily; "you must be crazy. Take away your hand." And hers, as well as his, seized the handle of the door. Her small, ice-cold hand brought him to his senses.

"I beg your pardon," he murmured confusedly. "Do go in and get warm if you can."

But instead of obeying, now that the rude young man withdrew his importuning, Miss Lane's hands fell from the knob, and close to his eyes she swayed before him, and Dan caught her in his arms—went into her room, carrying her. He had been wrong about Prince Poniotowsky; save for Higgins, the room was empty. The woman, though she exclaimed, showed no great surprise, and seemed prepared for such a fainting spell. Dan laid the actress on the sofa, and then the dresser said to him:

"Please go, sir; I can quite manage. She has these turns often. I'll give her brandy. She will be quite right."

But Dan hesitated, looking at the bit of humanity that he had laid with great gentleness on the divan, covered with pillows. Letty Lane lay there, small as a little child, inanimate as death. It was hard to think the quiet

little form could contain such life, fire, and motion, or that this senseless little creature held London with her voice and grace. Higgins knelt down by Letty Lane's side, quiet, capable, and going about the business of resuscitating her lady much as she laced the singer's bodice and shoes.

"If you would be so good as to open the door, sir, and send me the call-boy. They'll have to linger out this entr'acte or put in some feature."

"But," exclaimed Blair, "she can't go back to-night?"

"Lord, yes," Higgins returned. "Here, Miss Lane, drink this."

At the door, where he paused, Dan saw the actress lifted up and lean on Higgins' shoulder; and, assured then that she was not lifeless in good truth, he went out to do as Higgins had asked him. In a quarter of an hour, the curtain rose, and within half an hour Dan, from his box, saw the actress dance to the *Rajah* her charming polka, to the strains of the Hungarian band.

CHAPTER VIII.

He went the next day to see Letty Lane at the Savoy and learned that she was too ill to receive him. Mrs. Higgins, in the sitting room, told him so.

Dan liked the big, cordial face of the Scotchwoman, who acted as companion, dresser, and maid for the star. Mrs. Higgins had an affable face, one that welcomes, and she made it plain that she was not an enemy to this young caller.

The visitor, in his blue serge clothes, was less startling than most of the men that came to see her mistress.

"She works too hard, doesn't she?"

"She does everything too hard, sir."

"She ought to rest."

"I doubt if she does, even in her grave," returned Higgins. "She is too full of motion. She is like the little girl in the fairy book that danced in her grave."

Dan didn't like this comparison.

"Can't you make her hold up a little?"

Higgins smiled, and shook her head.

Letty Lane's sitting room was as full of roses as a flower garden. There were quantities of theatrical photographs in silver and leather frames on the tables and the piano. Signed portraits from crowned heads; pictures of well-known worldly men and women whom the dancer had charmed. But a full-length picture of Letty Lane herself in one of the dresses of "Mandalay" lay on the table near Dan, and he picked it up. She smiled at him enchantingly from the cardboard, across which was written, in her big, dashing hand:

For the Boy from my TOWN.

LETTY LANE.

Dan glanced up at Mrs. Higgins.

"Why, that looks as though that were for me."

The dressing woman nodded. "Miss Lane thought she would be able to see you to-day."

The picture in his hand, Dan gazed at it rapturously.

"I'm from Blairtown, Montana, where she came from."

"So she told me, sir."

He laid the picture back on the table, and Higgins understood that he wanted Miss Lane to give it to him herself. She led him affably to the door, and affably smiled upon him. His parting words were:

"Now, you make her take care of herself."

And, to please him, as she opened the door, she pleasantly assured him that she would do her very best.

Dan went out of the Savoy feeling that he had left something of himself behind him in the motley room of an actress with its perfumed atmosphere of roses and violets. The photograph which he had laid down on the table seemed to look out at him again, and he repeated delightedly: "That one was for me, all right! I'm the 'boy from her town,' and no mistake."

He wandered up as far as Piccadilly, went into a florist's, and stood before the flowers. Her sitting room had been full of roses, but Dan chose something else that had caught his eye from

the window. A huge country basket of primroses, smelling of the earth and the spring. He sent them with his card, and wrote on it: "To the Girl from my Town," and sent the gift with a pleasure as young and as fresh as was his own heart.

He got no note of acknowledgment from his flowers. Miss Lane was evidently better, and played every night; no mention was made of her indisposition in the papers. But Dan couldn't go to the Gaiety or bear to see her make the effort which he knew must tire her beyond words to conceive.

After a few days, he called at the Savoy to take news of her. He got as far as the lift when, going up in it, he saw Prince Poniotowsky. The sight affected Miss Lane's townsman so forcibly that, instead of going up to the actress' apartment, Dan took himself off, and anger, displeasure, and something like disgust were the only sentiments he carried away from the Savoy. He sent her no flowers, and gave himself up unreservedly to John Ruggles and to a couple of men who came in to see him by appointment.

And when, toward four o'clock, he found himself alone with Ruggles, Dan threw himself down in a big chair and looked intensely bored.

"Well, I guess we don't need to see any more of these fellows for a week, Dan." Ruggles yawned with relief. "I'm blamed if it isn't as hard to take care of money as to get it. I was a poor man once, and so was your father. Those were the days we had fun."

Ruggles took out a big cigar, struck a match sharply, and, when he had lit his Henry Clay, he fixed his gaze on the flying London fog, whose black curtain drew itself across their window.

"What's on to-night?" he asked at last. "Mandalay?"

Dan's fury at Prince Poniotowsky came back. "I guess you thought I was a little loose in the lid, didn't you, Josh, going so often to the same play?"

"You wouldn't have been the first rich man that had the same disease," Ruggles answered.

"There is nothing the matter with 'Mandalay,' but I'm not gone on any actress living, Josh; you are in the wrong pew."

Dan altered his indolent pose and sat forward. "But I *am* thinking of getting married," he said.

"I hope it's to the right girl, Dan."

And, with young assurance, Blair answered: "It will be if I marry her. I know what I want, all right."

"I hope she knows what she wants, Dan."

"How do you mean?"

"You or your money. You have the damndest handicap, my boy."

Blair flushed. "I'll get to hate the whole thing," he said ferociously. "It meets me everywhere—bonds—stocks—figures—dividends—coupons—deeds—it's too much! It is too much for me! Why, sometimes I feel a hundred years old, and like a hunk of gold."

Ruggles watched him for a moment, and then said cheerfully: "Come away, Dannie; let's do something wild. I feel up to most anything with this miserable fog down on me. If it had any nerve it would take some form or shape, so a man could choke it back."

Dan turned about. "What kind of a time do you mean?"

"Let's ask the Gaiety girl for dinner—for supper after the theatre."

"Letty Lane? She wouldn't go."

"Why not?"

"She is awfully delicate; it is all she can do to keep her contracts."

He knows that, Ruggles thought.

"Let's ask her, and see." He went over to the table, and drew out the paper. "Come on, and write and ask her to go out with us to supper."

"See here, Rug, what's this for?"

"What's strange in it? She is from our State, and if you don't hustle and ask her, I am going to ask her all alone."

Dan was puzzled as he sat down to the table, reflecting that it was perfectly possible that old Ruggles had fallen a prey to the charms of an actress. She wouldn't come, of course. He wrote a formal invitation without

thinking very much of what he said or how, folded and addressed his note.

"What did you say?" Ruggles asked eagerly.

"Why, that two boys from home wanted to give her a supper."

"Well," said Ruggles, "if the answer comes while you are out, I'll open it and give the orders. Think she'll come?"

"I do not," responded Dan, rather brutally. "She's got others to take her out to supper, you bet your life."

"Well, there's none of them as rich as you are, I reckon, Dan."

And the boy turned on him violently.

"See here, Josh, if you speak to me again of my money, when there's a woman in the question——"

He did not finish his threat, but snatched up his coat and hat and gloves, and went out of the door, slamming it after him.

Some time afterward, Mr. Ruggles' profound and happy snore was cut short by the page boy, who fetched in a note, with the Savoy stamping on the back. Ruggles opened it, not without emotion. It ran:

DEAR BOY: I haven't yet thanked you for the primroses; they were perfectly sweet; there is not one of them in any of my rooms, and I'll tell you why to-night. I am crazy to accept for supper, and I'm coming, but don't come after me at the Gaiety, please. I'll meet you at the Carlton after the theatre. Who's the other boy?
L. L.

The other boy read the note with much difficulty, for it was badly written.

"He'll have to stop sending her flowers and going every night to the theatre unless he wants a row with the duchess," he said dryly.

And, with a certain interest in his rôle, Ruggles rang for the head waiter, and, with the man's help, ordered his first midnight supper for an actress.

CHAPTER IX.

The bright tide of worldly London flows after and around midnight into the various restaurants and supper rooms, and, as well, through the corridors and halls of the Carlton. At one

of the small tables, bearing a great expensive bunch of orchids and soft ferns, Josh Ruggles, in a new evening dress, sat waiting for his party. Dan had dined with Lord Galorey, and the two men had gone out together afterward, and Ruggles had not seen the boy to give him Letty Lane's note.

"Got it with you?" Blair asked when he came in, and Ruggles responded that he didn't carry love letters around in his dress clothes.

They could tell by the interest in the room when the actress was coming, and both men rose as Letty Lane floated in at flood tide with a crowd of last arrivals.

She had not dressed this evening with the intention that her dark simplicity of attire should be conspicuous. The cloak which Dan took from her shed the perfume of orris, and revealed the woman in a blaze of shining paillettes. She seemed made out of sparkle, and her blonde head, from which a bright ornament shook, was the most brilliant thing about her, though her dress from hem to throat glistened with disks of gold like moonshine on a starry sea. The actress' look of surprise when she saw Ruggles indicated that she had not expected a boy of his age!

"The other boy?" She nodded. "Well, this is the nicest supper party ever! And you are awfully good to ask me."

Ruggles patted his shirt front, and adjusted his cravat.

"My idea," he told her. "All the blame on me, Miss Lane. Charge it up to me! Dan, here, had cold feet from the first. He said you wouldn't come."

She laughed deliciously.

"He did? Hasn't got much faith, has he?"

Miss Lane drew her long gloves off, touched the orchids with her little hands, on which the ever-present rings flashed, and went on talking to Ruggles, to whom she seemed to want to address her conversation.

"I'm simply crazy over these flowers."

The older man showed his pleasure. "My choice again! Walked up myself and chose the bunch. Blame me again. Ditto supper; mine from start to finish—hope you'll like it. I would have added in some Montana peas and some chocolate soda water, only I thought you might not understand the joke."

Miss Lane beamed upon him. Although he was unconscious of it, she was not fully at ease; he was not the kind of man she had expected to see. Accustomed to young fellows like the boy, and their mad devotion, accustomed to men with whom she could be herself, the big, bluff, middle-aged gentleman, with his painfully correct tie, his rumpled, iron-gray hair, and his deference to her, though an unusual diversion, was a little embarrassing.

"Oh, I know your supper is ripping, Mr. Ruggles. I'm on a diet of milk and eggs myself, and I expect your order didn't take in those." But at his fallen countenance, she hurried to say: "Oh, I wouldn't have told you that if I hadn't been intending to break through."

And with childlike anticipation she clapped her hands, and said: "We're going to have 'lots of fun.' Just think, they don't know what that means here in London. They say 'heaps of sport, you know.'" She imitated the accent maliciously. "It's just we Americans who know what 'lots of fun' is, isn't it?"

Near her Dan Blair's young eyes were drinking in the spectacle of delicate beauty beautifully gowned, of soft skin, glorious hair, and he gazed like a child at a pantomime. Under his breath, he exclaimed now, with effusion: "You bet your life we are going to have lots of fun!"

But, after all, she only picked at her food, drinking what they poured in her glass, and every time she spoke to Dan a look of charming kindness crossed her face, an expression of good fellowship which Ruggles noted with interest.

London had gone mad over Letty Lane, whose traits and contour were

the admiration of the world at large and familiar even to the newsboys; and whose likeness was nearly as familiar as that of the Madonnas of old. Her face was oval and perfectly formed, with the reddest of mouths—the most delicious and softest of mouths—the line of her brows clear and straight, and her gray eyes large and as innocent and appealing as a child's; under their long lashes they opened up like flowers. It was said that no man could withstand their appeal; that she had but to look to make a man her slave; and as more than once she turned to Dan, smiling and gracious, Ruggles watched her, mutely thinking of what he had heard this day, for after her letter came accepting their invitation he had taken pains to find out the things he wanted to know. It had not been difficult. As her face and form were public, on every post card and in every photographer's shop, so the actress' reputation was the property of the public.

As Ruggles repeated these things to himself, he watched her beside the son of his old friend. They were talking—rather she was, and behind the orchids and the ferns her voice was sweet and enthralling.

Ruggles could hear her say: "Roach came to the house and told my people that I had a fortune in my voice. I was living with my uncle and my step-aunt, and working in the store. And that same day your father sent down a check for five hundred dollars. He said it was 'for the little girl with the sweet voice,' and it gives me a lot of pleasure to think that I began my lessons on *that money*."

The son of old Dan Blair said earnestly: "I'm darned glad you did—I'm darned glad you did!"

Letty Lane nodded. "So am I. But," with some sharpness, "I don't see why you speak that way. I've earned my way. I made a fortune for Roach, all right."

"You mean the man you married?"

"Married! Goodness gracious, what made you think that?" She threw back her pretty head and laughed—a

laugh with the least possible merriment in it. "Oh, heavens, marry old Job Roach! So they say *that*, do they? I never heard that. I hear a lot, but I never heard that fairy tale."

She put her hands to her cheeks, which had grown crimson. "That's not true!"

Dan swore at himself for his tactless stupidity.

Ruggles had heard both sides. She was adored by the poor, and, as far as rumor knew, she spent thousands upon the London paupers, and the Westerner, who had never been given to dilating upon scandals and to whom there was something wicked in speaking ill of a woman, no matter who she might be, listened with embarrassment to tales he had been told in answer to his other questions; and turned with relief to the stories of Letty Lane's charity, and to the stories of her popularity and her success. They were more agreeable, but they couldn't make him forget the rest, and now, as he looked at her face across the bouquet of orchids and ferns, it was with a sinking of heart, a great pity for her, and still a decided enmity. He disapproved of her down to the ground. He didn't let himself think how he felt, but it was for the boy. Ruggles was not a man of the world, in any sense; he was simple and Puritan in his judgments, and his gentle nature and his big heart kept him from pharisaical and strenuous measures. He had been led in what he was doing to-night by a diplomacy and a common sense that few men east of the Mississippi would have thought out under the circumstances.

"Tell Mr. Ruggles," he heard Dan say to her. "Tell him—tell him!"

And she answered:

"I was telling Mr. Blair that, as he is so frightfully rich, I want him to give me some money."

Ruggles gasped, but answered quietly:

"Well, he's a great giver, Miss Lane."

"I guess he is, if he's like his father," she returned. "I am trying to

get a lot, though, out of him, and when you asked me to dine to-night I said to myself: 'I'll accept, for it will be a good time to ask Mr. Blair to help me out in what I want to do.'"

At Ruggles' face, she smiled sweetly, and said graciously:

"Oh, don't think I wouldn't have come, anyway. But I'm awfully tired these days, and going out to supper is just one thing too much to do. I want Mr. Blair," she said, turning to Ruggles, as if she knew a word from him would make the thing go through, "to help me build a rest home down on the English coast for girls who get discouraged in their art. When I think of the *luck* I have had and how these things have been from the beginning, and how money has just poured in, why, it just makes my heart ache to think of the girls who try and fail, who go on for a little while and have to give up. You can't tell"—she nodded to Ruggles, as though she were herself a matron of forty—"you can not tell what their temptations are, or what comes up to make them go to pieces."

Ruggles listened with interest.

"I haven't thought it all out yet, but so many come to me tired out and discouraged, and I think a nice home, taken care of by a good creature like my Higgins, let us say, would be a perfect blessing to them. They could go there, and rest and study and just think, and perhaps"—slowly, as though whilst she spoke she saw a vision of a tired self, for whom there had been no rest and no place of retreat—"perhaps a lot of them would pull through in a different way. Now, to-day"—she broke her meditative tone short—"I got a letter from a hospital where a poor thing that used to sing with me in New York was dying with consumption—all gone to pieces and discouraged, and there is where your primroses went to." She nodded to Dan. "Higgins took them. You don't mind?"

Blair, with a warmth in his voice, touched by her pity more than by her charity, said:

"Why, they grew for you, Miss

Lane; I don't care what you do with them."

Letty Lane sank her head on her hands, her elbows leaned on the table. She seemed suddenly to have lost interest even in her topic. She looked around the room indifferently. The orchestra was softly playing "The Dove Song" from "Mandalay," and very softly, under her breath, the star hummed it, her eyes vaguely fixed on some unknown scene. To Dan and to Ruggles she had grown strange. The music, her brilliancy, her sudden indifference, put her out of their commonplace reach. Ruggles, to himself, thought with relief:

"She doesn't care one rap for the boy, anyway, thank God! She's got other fish to land."

And Dan Blair thought: "It's my infernal money again." But he was generous at heart, and glad to be of service to her, and touched by her poor.

Then two or three men came up and joined them. She greeted them indolently, bestowing a word or a look on this one or on that. All fire and light seemed to have gone out of her, and Dan said:

"You are tired. I guess I had better take you home."

She did not appear to hear him. Indeed, she was not looking at him, and Dan saw Prince Poniotowsky making his way toward their table across the room.

Letty Lane rose. Dan put her cloak about her shoulders, and, glancing toward Ruggles and toward the boy as indifferently as she had considered the newcomers, who formed a small group around the brilliant figure of the actress, she nodded good night to both Ruggles and Blair and went up to the Hungarian as though he were her husband, who had come to take her home. However, at the door she sufficiently shook off her mood to slightly smile at Dan.

"I have had 'lots of fun.' Thank you both so much."

Until they were up in their sitting room her hosts did not exchange a

word. Then Ruggles took a book up from the table, and sat down with his cigar.

"I am going to read a little, Dan. Slept all day; feel as wide awake as an owl."

Dan showed no desire to be communicative, however, to Ruggles' disappointment, but he exclaimed abruptly:

"I'll be darned, Ruggles, if I can guess what you asked her for!"

"Well, it did turn out to be a pretty expensive party for you, Dannie, didn't it?" Ruggles returned humorously. "I'll let you off from any more supper parties."

And Dan fumed as he turned his back. "*Expensive!* There you are again, Ruggles, with your infernal mention of money into everything I do."

When the older man found himself alone, he read a little, and then put his book down, to muse. And his meditations were on the tide of life and the beds it runs over—the living whirlpool as Ruggles himself had seen it coursing through London under fog and mist. It seemed now to surge up to his very windows in the dark, and the flow mysteriously passed under his windows in these silent hours when no one can see the muddy, muddy bottom over which the waters go. Out of the sound, as it flowed on, the cries rose, he thought, kindly to his ears:

"God bless her—God bless Letty Lane!"

CHAPTER X.

The Duchess of Breakwater had made Dan promise at Osdene the day he went back to London that he would take her over to her own place, Stainer Court, and with her see the beauty, ruins, and traditions of the place; and when Dan got up well on in the morning, Ruggles was out. Everything his thoughts turned to was Letty Lane; with irritation, he put her out of his mind. There had come up between himself and the girl he had known slightly in his own town, years ago, a wall of partition. Every time he saw

her, Poniotowsky was there, condescending, arrogant, rude, and proud. The prince the night before had given the tips of his fingers to Dan, nodded to Ruggles, as if the Westerner had been his tailor, had appropriated Letty Lane, and she had gone away under his shadow. The simplicity of Dan's life, his decent bringing up, his immaculate youth—for such it was—his aloofness from the world, made him naive, but he was not dull. He waited—not like a skeptic who would fit every one into his pigeonholes; on the contrary, he waited to find every one as perfect as he knew they must be, and every time he tried to think of Letty Lane, Poniotowsky troubled him horribly, and seemed to rise before him, and, sardonically looking at him through his eyeglass, made the boy's belief in good things ridiculous.

He wrote a note to Ruggles, saying that he would be back late, and not to wait for him, and set out in his own car for Stainer Court, where the duchess was to meet him at noon. On his way out, he decided that he had been a darned fool to have discussed Letty Lane with the Duchess of Breakwater, and that it had been none of his business to put her duty before her, and that he had judged her quickly and unfairly. He fell in love with the lovely English country over which his motor took him, and it made him more affectionate toward the English woman.

When they stopped at Castelene, the property belonging to Stainer Court, he felt something of proprietorship stir in him, and at Stainer Arms ordered a drink, bought petroleum, and then pushed up the avenue under the leafless giant trees, whose roots were older than his father's name or than any State of the Union. And he felt admiration and something like emotion as he saw the first towers of Stainer Court finally appear.

The duchess waited for him in the room known as the "Green Knight's Room," because of a figure in tapestry on the walls. The legend in wool had been woven in Spain, somewhere about the time when Isabella was kind and

when, in turn, a continent loomed up for the world in general out of the mist. The subject of the Green Knight's tapestry was simple and convincing. On a sheer-cut village of low ferns, where daisies stood up like trees, a slender lady poised, her dark-sandaled feet on the pinelike turf. Her figure was all swathed round with a spotless dress of woolly white, softened by age into a golden, misty tone. A pair of friendly and confidential rabbits crouched close to her golden slippers. The lady's face was candid and mild; her eyes were soft, and around her head was wound a fillet of woven threads, mellow in tone; a red, no doubt, originally, but softened to a coral pink by time. This lady, in all her grace and virginal sweetness, was only half of the woven story. To her right stood a youth, in forest green, his sword drawn, and his intention evidently to kill a creature, which, near to the gentle rabbits, out of the daisied grass lifted its cruel, snakelike head. For nearly five hundred years the serpent's venom had been poised, and if the serpent should start the Green Knight would strike, too, at the same magic moment.

Close to the tapestry, a fire had been laid in the broad fireplace, and the duchess had ordered the luncheon table for Dan and herself spread with the cold things England knows how to combine into a delectable feast.

When Dan came in, he found her in a short tweed skirt, a mannish blouse, looking boyish and wholly charming, and she mixed him a cocktail under the Green Knight's very nose, and offered it with the wisdom of the serpent itself; and the duchess didn't in the least suggest the white-robed, milk-white lady.

The friends drank their cocktails in good spirits, and Dan presented the lady with the flowers he had brought her, and he felt a strong sentiment stir at the sight of her in this old room, alone, and waiting for him. The servants left them; the duchess put her hand on the boy's broad shoulders. Nearly as tall as he, she was a good

example of the best-looking English woman, long and strong, and her eyes were level, and Dan met them with his own.

"I am so glad you came," she murmured. "I've been ragging myself every minute since you went away from Osdene."

"You have? What for?"

"Because I was such a perfect prig. I'll do anything you like for Miss Lane. I mean to say, I'll arrange for a musicale, and ask her to sing."

The color rushed into Dan's face. How bully of her! What a brick this showed her to be! He said: "You are as sweet as a peach!"

The duchess' hands were still on his shoulders. She could feel his rapid breath.

The boy covered her hand with his own.

If the Spanish tapestry could only have reversed its idea! And if the immaculate lady, or even one of the rabbits, could have drawn a sword to protect the Green Knight, it would have been passing well. But the woven work, when it first had been embroidered, was done forever; it was irrevocable in its mistaken idea, that it is only the woman who needs protection.

CHAPTER XI.

As Dan went through the halls of the Carlton on his way to his rooms that same evening, the porter gave him two notes, which Dan went down into the smoking room to read. He tore open the note bearing the Hotel Savoy on the envelope, and read:

DEAR BOY: Will you come around to-night and see me about five o'clock? Don't let anything keep you. I want to talk to you about something very important. Come sure.
L. L.

Dan looked at the clock; it was after nine, and she would be at the Gaiety, going on with her performance.

The other note, which he opened more slowly, was from Ruggles, and it began in just the same way as the dancer's had begun:

DEAR BOY: I have been suddenly called

back to the United States. As I didn't know how to get at you, I couldn't. I had a cable that takes me right back. I get my boat at Liverpool and you can send me a Marconi. Better make the first boat you can and come over.

Ruggles left no word of advice, and unconscious of this master stroke on the part of the old man, whose heart yearned after him as for his own son, Dan folded the note up, and thought no more about Ruggles.

When, an hour later, he came out of the Carlton, he was prepared for the life of the evening. He stopped at the telephone desk, and sent a telegram to Ruggles on the *Lusitania*:

Can't come yet a while; am engaged to be married to the Duchess of Breakwater.

He wrote this out in full, and the man at the Marconi "sat up," and smiled as he wrote. Then, with Letty Lane's badly written note in his pocket, and wondering very much at her summons of him, he drove to the Gaiety, and at the end of the third act went back of the scenes. In her dressing room, Higgins was lacing her into a white bodice, and Miss Lane, before her glass, was putting the rouge on her lips.

"Hello, you!" She nodded to Dan.

"I am awfully sorry not to have shown up at five. Just got your note. Just got in at the hotel; been out of town all day."

But there was no time for more. "Miss Lane—Miss Lane," exclaimed the callboy outside.

"Miss Lane," said Higgins, "it is time you went on."

Dan caught up a great soft shawl from the chair, wrapped it around her tenderly, and she flitted out, Higgins after her.

Then he went back to the theatre, and stood up, in the back, for the house was crowded to hear her sing. It was souvenir night; there were post cards and little coral caps with feathers as bonbonnières. They called her out before the curtain a dozen times, and each time Dan wanted to cry "Mercy" for her. Then his hands clinched as he thought of Poniotowsky, and he

tried to recall that he was an engaged man. He had an idea that Letty Lane was looking for him through the performance. She finished in a storm of applause, and flowers were strewn upon her, and Dan found himself, in spite of his resolution, going back behind the scenes.

This time two or three cards were sent in. One by one, he saw the visitors refused, and Dan, without any formality, himself knocked at Letty Lane's small door, which Higgins opened, looked back over her shoulder to give his name to her mistress, and said to Dan confidently:

"Wait, sir; just wait a bit."

And, in a few moments, to Dan's astonished delight, the actress herself appeared, a big scarf over her head and her body enveloped in her snowy cloak, and he understood, with a leap of his heart, that she had singled him out to take her home!

She went before him through the wings to the stage entrance, which he opened for her, and she passed out before him into the fog and the mist. For the first time, Blair followed her between the crowd, which was a big one on this night. On the one side waited the poor, who wished her many blessings, and on the other side her admirers, whose thoughts were quite different. Something of this flashed through Dan's mind, struck all through him—and in that short run he touched the serious part of life for the first time.

In Letty Lane's motor, the small electric light lit over their head and the flower vase empty, he sat beside the fragrant human creature whom London adored, and knew his place would have been envied by many a man.

"Say, this is awfully nice of you to let me take you home!"

She seemed small in her corner.

"You were great to-night," Dan went on, "simply great. Weren't the crowd crazy about you, though! How does it feel to stand there and hear them clap like a thunderstorm, and call your name?"

She replied with effort: "It was a nice audience, wasn't it? Oh, I don't

know how it feels. It is rather stimulating. How's the other boy?" she asked abruptly, and when Dan had said that Ruggles had left him alone in London, she turned, and laughed a little.

"We have passed the Savoy." He looked out of the window, and Letty Lane replied:

"I told them to go to the Carlton first."

She was taking him home, then!

"Well, you've got to come in and have some supper with me, in that case," he cried eagerly, and she told him that she had taken him home because she knew that Mr. Ruggles would approve.

"Not much you won't," he said, and put his hand on the speaking tube, but she stopped him.

"Don't give any orders in my motor, Mr. Blair. You sit still where you are."

"Do you think that I am such a simple youth that I——"

Letty Lane, with a gesture of supreme ennui, said to him impatiently:

"Oh, I just think I am perfectly tired to death; don't bother me. I want my own way."

Her voice and her gesture, her beauty and her indifference, her sort of vague lack of interest in him and in everything, put the boy, full of life as he was, out of ease, but he ventured, after a second.

"Got some news to tell you," he exclaimed abruptly. "Want you to congratulate me. I'm engaged to be married to the Duchess of Breakwater. She happens to be a great admirer of your voice."

The actress turned sharply to him, and in the dark he could see her little, white face. The covering over her head fell back, and she exclaimed: "Heavens!" and impulsively put her hands out over his. "Do you really mean what you say?"

"Yes." He nodded surprisedly.

"What do you look like that for?" Letty Lane arranged her scarf and then drew back from him, and laughed.

"Oh, dear, dear, dear!" she ex-

claimed. "And I—and I have been so—so—"

She looked up at him swiftly, as though she fancied she might detect some new quality in him which she had not observed before, but she saw only his clear, kind eyes, his charming smile, and his beautiful, young ignorance, and said softly:

"No use to cry, little boy, if it's true! But that woman isn't half good enough for you—not half, and I guess you think it funny enough to hear *me* say so! What does the other boy from Montana say?"

"Don't know," Dan answered indifferently. "Marconied him; didn't tell him about it before he left. You see he doesn't understand England—doesn't like it."

A little dazed by the way each of the two women took the mention of the other, he asked timidly:

"You don't like the Duchess of Breakwater, then?"

And she laughed again.

"Goodness gracious, I don't know her; actresses don't sit around with duchesses."

Then abruptly under her curled dark eyelashes, her beautiful eyes on him, she asked:

"Do *you* like her?"

"You bet!" he said ardently. "Of course, I do. I am crazy about her." Yet he realized, as he replied, that he didn't have any inclination to begin to talk about his fiancée.

They had reached the Carlton, and the door of Letty Lane's motor was held open.

"Better get out," he urged, "and have something to eat."

And she, leaning a little toward him, laughed:

"Crazy! Your engagement would be broken off to-morrow." And she further said: "If I really thought it would, why I'd come like a shot."

As she leaned forward, her cloak slipping from her neck, revealing her throat above the dark collar of the simple dress she wore, as he looked in her dove-gray eyes, he murmured:

"Oh, say, do come along and risk it. I'm game, all right."

She hesitated, then bade him good night languidly, slipping back into her old attitude of indifference.

"I am going home to rest. Good night. I don't think the duchess would let you go, no matter what you did!"

Dan walked into the Carlton when her bright motor had slipped away, his evening coat, long and black, flying its wings behind him, his hat on the back of his blond head; light of foot and step, a gay young figure amongst the late, lingering crowd.

He went to his rooms and missed Ruggles in the lonely quiet of the sitting room, but, as the night before Ruggles had done, Dan, in his bedroom window, stood looking out at the mist and fog, through which before his eyes the things he had lately seen passed and repassed, spectrelike, winglike, across the gloom. Finally, in spite of the fact that he was an engaged man, with the responsibilities of marriage before him, he couldn't think of but one thing to take with him when he finally turned to sleep. The face of the woman he was engaged to marry eluded him, but the face under the white hood of Letty Lane was in his dreams, and in his troubled visions he saw her shining, dovelike eyes.

CHAPTER XII.

The duchess ran Dan, made plans, set the pace, and the fiancés were very much in evidence during the season. The young American, good-natured and generous, the duchess beautiful and knowing, were the comment of London, and those of her friends who would have tolerated Dan on account of his money, ended by sincerely liking him. The wedding day had not been fixed as yet, and Dan was not so violently carried away that he could not wait to be married. Meanwhile Gordon Galorey thanked God for the delay, and hoped for a miracle to break the spell over his friend's son before it should be too late.

In early May the question came up

regarding the musicale. The duchess made her list and arranged the Sunday afternoon and her performers to suit her taste, and the week before lounged in her boudoir when Dan and Galorey appeared for a late morning call.

"There, Dan," she said, holding out a bit of paper, "look at the list and the programme, will you?"

"Sounds and reads all right," commented Dan, handing it on to Galorey.

Besides being an artistic event, she intended that the concert should serve to present Dan to her special set. She now lit a cigarette and gave one to each of her friends, lighting the Englishman's herself.

"The best names in London," Lord Galorey said. "You see, Dan, we shall trot you out in a royal way. I hope you fully appreciate how swagger this is to be."

Glancing again at the list, Blair remarked:

"But I don't see Miss Lane's name."

"Why should you?" the duchess answered sharply.

"Why, we planned all along that she was to sing," he returned.

She gave a long puff to her cigarette.

"We did *rather* speak of it. But we shall do very well as we are. I think we will let the thing stand as it is. It's really too late now, you know, Dan."

Unruffled, but with a determination which Lord Galorey and the lady were far from guessing, Blair resumed tranquilly:

"Oh, I guess Miss Lane'll come in all right, late as it is. We'll send her around word and fix it up."

The duchess turned to him, annoyed. "Oh, don't be a beastly bore, dear—you are not really serious."

Dan still smiled at her sweetly. "You bet your life I am, though, Lily."

She rang a bell at the side of her desk, and when the footman came in gave him a paper. "See that this is taken at once to the stationer's."

"Better wait, Lily"—her fiancé extended his hand—"until the programme

is made out the way it is going to stand." And Blair fixed his handsome eyes on his future wife. "Why, we got this shindig up," he noted irreverently, "just so Miss Lane could sing at it."

"Nonsense!" she cried, angry and powerless. "You ridiculous creature! Fancy me getting up a musicale for Letty Lane! Do tell Dan to stop bothering and fussing, Gordon. He's too ridiculous!"

And Lord Galorey said: "What is the row, anyway?"

"Why, I want Miss Lane to sing here on Sunday," Dan explained.

"And I don't want her," finished the Duchess of Breakwater, who was evidently unwilling to force a scene before Lord Galorey. She handed the list to her servant, but Dan intercepted it.

"Don't send out that list, Lily, as it is." He gave it back to her, and his tone was so cool, his expression so decided and quiet, that she was disarmed, and dismissed the servant, telling him to return when she should ring again. Coloring with anger, she tapped the envelope against her brilliantly polished nails.

If she had been married to Blair she would have burst into a violent rage; if he had been poorer than he was she would have put him in his place. Lord Galorey understood the contraction of her brows and lips as Dan reminded:

"You promised me that you would have her, you know, Lily."

"Give in, Lily," Galorey advised, rising from the chair where he was lounging. "Give in gracefully."

And she turned on Galorey the anger which she dared not show the other man. But Dan interrupted her, explaining simply:

"I knew the girl when she was a kid; she is from my old home, and I want Lily to ask her here to sing for us, and then to see if we can't get her out of the state she is in."

And Galorey repeated vaguely: "State?"

"Why, she's all run down, tired out; she's got no real friends in London."

The other man flicked the ash from his cigarette and looked at Blair's boy through his monocle.

"And you thought that Lily might befriend her, old chap?"

"Yes," nodded Dan; "just give her a lift, you know."

Galorey nodded back, smiling gently. "I see, I see—a moral, spiritual lift? I see—I see." He glanced at the woman with his strange smile.

She put her cigarette down and seated herself, clasping her hands around her knees, and looked at her fiancé.

"It's none of my business what Letty Lane's reputation is; I don't care, but you must understand one thing, Dan, I'm not a reformer, or a charitable institution, and if she comes here it is purely professional."

He took the subject as settled, and asked for a copy of the programme and put it in his pocket. "I'll get the names of her songs from her and take the thing myself to Harrison's. And I'd better hustle, I guess; there's no time to lose between now and Sunday."

And he went out triumphant.

Galorey remained, smoking, and the duchess continued her notes in silence, cooling down at her desk. Her companion knew her too well to speak to her until she had herself in hand, and when finally she took up her pen and turned about, she appeared conscious for the first time of his presence.

"Here, still!" she exclaimed.

"I thought I might do for a safety valve, Lily. You could let some of your anger out on me."

The duchess left her desk and came over to him.

"I expect you despise me thoroughly, don't you, Gordon?"

They had not been alone together since her engagement to Blair, for she had taken pains to avoid every opportunity for a tête-à-tête.

"Despise you?" he repeated gently. "It's awfully hard, isn't it, for a chap like me to despise anybody? We're none of us used to the best quality of behavior, you know, my dear girl."

"Don't talk rot, Gordon," she murmured. But he continued:

"I think Dan Blair is excellent stuff."

"He is the greenest, youngest, most ridiculous infant," she exclaimed, with irritation, and he laughed.

"His money is old enough to walk, however; isn't it, Lily?"

She made an angry gesture.

"I expected you'd say something loathsome."

Her companion met her eyes directly. She left her chair and came and sat down beside him on the small sofa. As he did not move, or look at her, but regarded his cigarette with interest, she leaned close to him and whispered:

"Gordon, try to be nice and decent. Try to forget yourself. Don't you see what a wonderful chance it is for me, and that, as far as you and I were concerned, it can't go on?"

The face of the man by her side grew sombre. The charm this woman had for him had never lessened since the day when he told her he loved her, long before his marriage, and they were both too poor.

He rose and stood over her, looking down at her beautiful form and her somewhat softened face, but his eyes were hard and his face very pale.

"You had better go, Gordon," she said slowly; "you had better go."

Then, as he obeyed her and went like a flash as far as the door, she followed him and whispered softly: "If you're really only jealous, I can forgive you."

He managed to get out: "His father was my friend; he sent the boy to me, and I've been a bad guardian." He made a gesture of despair. "Put yourself in my place. Let Dan Blair go, Lily; let him go."

Her eyelids flickered a little, and she said sharply: "You're out of your senses, Gordon—and what if I love him?"

With a low exclamation he caught her hand at the wrist so hard that she cried out, and he said between his

teeth: "You *don't* love him; take those words back."

"Of course I do. Let me free."

"No," he said passionately, holding her fast. "Not until you take that back."

His face, his tone, his force, dominated her; the remembrance of their past, a possible future, made her waver under his eyes, and the woman smiled at him as Blair had never seen her smile.

"Very well, then, goose," she capitulated almost tenderly. "I don't love that boy, of course. I'm marrying him for his money. Now, will you let me go?"

But he held her still more firmly and kissed her several times before he finally set her free, and went out of the house miserable—bound to her by the strongest chains—bound in his conscience and by honor to his trust to Dan's father, and yet handicapped by another sense of honor which decrees that man must keep silence to the end.

CHAPTER XIII.

The house of the Duchess of Breakwater in Park Lane was white, with green blinds and green balconies; beautiful, distinguished, and old, mellow with traditions; and the tide of fashion poured its stream into the music room to listen to the Sunday concert.

The last guest to go into the drawing-room of the Duchess of Breakwater was the young American man in whom the magic of the season had stirred his blood. He seemed the youngest and the brightest guest to cross the sill of the great house whose debts he was going to pay, and whose future he was going to secure with American money. Close after him a motor car rolled up to the curb, and under the awning Letty Lane passed quickly, as though thistledown, blown into the distinguished house. The actress was taken possession of by several people and shown upstairs.

Dan spoke to his hostess, who wore, over her azure dress, a necklace given her by him. She said he was "too late for words," and why hadn't he

come before. After greeting him she set him free, and he went eagerly to find his place next an oldish woman whom he liked immensely, Lady Caiwarn. Lady Caiwarn had a calm, kind face, and Dan sat down beside her, well out of the crush, and they talked amiably throughout the violin solo.

After that was finished, through the room ran the little anticipatory rustle that comes before the great, and that when they have gone breaks into applause. The great actress had appeared to give her number. Dan and Lady Caiwarn, behind the palms in a little corner of their own, watched her.

A clever understanding of the world into which she was to come this day had made the girl dress like a charm. She stood quietly by the piano, her hands folded; amongst the high ladies of the English world in their splendid frocks, their jewels and feathers, she was a simple figure, her dress snow white, high to her throat, unadorned by any gay color, according to the fashion of the time; it was such a dress as Romney might have painted, and under her arms and from across her breast there fell a soft, coral-colored silken scarf. The costume was daring in its simplicity. Her hair was a golden crown and her eyes like stars. She was excited, and the scarlet had run along her cheeks like wine spilled over ivory.

She looked around the room, failed to see Blair, but saw the Duchess of Breakwater in her velvet and her jewels. Letty Lane began to sing. Dan and she had chosen "Mandalay," and she began with it. Whatever she knew of seduction and charm, she put in the rendering of her song. Even the conventional, audience, most of which knew her well, were enchanted over again, and they went wild about her. She had never been so charming. The men applauded her until she began in self-defense another favorite of the moment, and ended in a perfect huzzah of applause.

She refused to sing again until, in the distance, she saw Dan standing by the column near his seat. Then in-

dicating to the pianist what she wanted, she sang "The Earl of Moray," such a rendering of the old ballad as had not been heard in London, and coming, as it did, from the lips of a popular singer whose character and whose verve were not supposed to be sympathetic to a piece of music of this kind, the effect was startling.

Dan felt his heart grow cold. If she had awakened him when he was a little boy, she thrilled him now; he could have wept. Lady Caiwarn did wipe tears away. When the last note of the accompaniment had ended, Dan's friend at his side said:

"How utterly ravishing! What a beautiful, lovely creature; how charming and how frail!"

He scarcely answered. He was making his way to Letty Lane, and he wrung her hand, murmuring, "Oh, you're great; you're great!" And the pleasure on his face repaid her over and over again. "Come, I want you to meet the Duchess of Breakwater, and some other friends of mine."

And as he let her little cold hand fall and turned about, the room as by magic had cleared. The prime minister had arrived late and was in the other room. The refreshments were also being served. There was no one to meet Letty Lane, except for several young men, who came eagerly up and asked to be presented, Gordon Galorey among them.

"Where's Lily?" Dan asked him. "I want her to meet Miss Lane."

"In the conservatory with the prime minister. And Galorey looked meaningly at Dan, as much as to say: "Now, don't be an utter fool."

But Letty Lane herself saved the situation. She shook hands with the utmost cordiality and sweetness with the men who had been presented to her, and asked Dan to take her to her motor. He waited for her at the door, and she came down wrapped around as usual in her filmy scarf.

"Are you better?" he asked eagerly. "You look awfully stunning, and I don't think I can ever thank you enough."

She assured him that she was "all right," and that she had a "lovely new rôle to learn and that it was coming on next month." He helped her in, and she seemed to fill the motor like a basket of fresh white flowers. Again he repeated, as he held the door open:

"I can't thank you enough; you were a great success."

She smiled wickedly, and couldn't resist:

"Especially with the women."

Dan's face flushed; he was already deeply hurt for her, and her words showed him that the insult had gone home.

"Where are you going now?"

"Right to the Savoy."

Without another word, hatless as he was, he got into the motor, and closed the door.

"I'm going to take you home," he informed her quietly, "and there's no use in looking at me like that either! When I'm set on a thing I get it!"

They rolled away in the bland sunset, passed the park, down Piccadilly, where the flowers in the streets were so sweet that they made the heart ache, and the air through the window was so sweet that it made the senses swim.

CHAPTER XIV.

The next night Dan, magnetically drawn down the Strand to the Gaiety, arrived just before the close of the last act, slipped in, and sat far back watching Letty Lane close her part. After hearing her sing as she had the afternoon before in the worldly group, it was curious to see her before the public in her flashing dress and to realize how much she was a thing of the people.

To-night she was a completely personal element to Dan. He could never think of her again as he had hitherto. The sharp drive through the town in her motor had made a change in his feelings. He had been hurt for her, with anger at the Duchess of Breakwater's rudeness, and from the first he had always known that there was in him a hot championship for the ac-

tress. To-night, whenever the man who sang with her put his arms around the leading lady, danced with her, held her, it was an offense to Dan Blair; it had angered him before, but to-night it did more. One by one, everything faded out of his foreground but the brilliant little figure with her golden hair, her lovely face, her beautiful, graceful body. And when in her last gesture on the stage, before the curtain goes down, she seemed to Blair to call him, and distinctly to make an appeal to him:

"You might rest your weary feet
If you came to Mandalay."

Now he felt at those words how, with all his heart, he longed that the dancer should rest those lovely tired little feet of hers, far away from any call of the public, far away on some lovely shore which the hymn tune called the coral strand! As he gazed at her mobile, sensitive face, whose eyes had seen the world, and where the lips— Dan's thoughts changed here with a great pang, and the close of his meditations was only in the words: "Gosh, she ought to rest!"

The boy walked briskly back of the scenes toward the little door, behind which, as he tapped, he hoped with all his heart to hear her voice bid him come in. But there were other voices in the room. He rattled the doorknob, and Letty Lane herself called to him without opening the door:

"Will you go, please, Mr. Blair? I can't see any one to-night."

He had nothing to do but to go—to grind his heel as he turned—to swear deeply against Poniotowsky. His late ecstasy was turned to gall.

Without, in the street, the boy took his place with the other men and waited to see her pass. Dan, too, a bitter taste in his mouth and anger in his breast, waited until Letty Lane fluttered down, followed by Poniotowsky, and the two drove away.

The young man could have gone after, running behind the motor, but there was a taxicab at hand; he jumped in it, ordering the man to follow the car to the Savoy. There the boy had

the pleasure of seeing Miss Lane enter the hotel, Poniotowsky with her—had the anguish of seeing them both go up in the lift to her apartments.

When Dan came to himself, he heard the chimes of St. Martin's ring out eleven. He then remembered for the first time that he had promised to dine alone at home with the Duchess of Breakwater.

"Gosh, Lily will be wild!"

In spite of the lateness of the hour he pursued his way to Park Lane. The familiar face of the manservant who let him in blurred before the young man's eyes. Her grace was out at the theatre? Blair would wait then, and he went into the small drawing-room, quiet, empty, reposeful, with a fire across the andirons, for the evening was damp and cool. Still dazed by his jealous, passionate emotions, he glanced about the room, chose a long leather sofa, and, stretching out his length, fell asleep.

There in the shadow he slept profoundly, waking suddenly to find that he was not alone. Across the room the Duchess of Breakwater stood by the table; she was in evening dress, her cloak and gloves on the chair at her side. She laughed softly, and the man to whom she laughed, on whom she smiled, was Lord Galorey.

Blair raised himself up on the sofa without making any noise, and he saw Galorey take the woman in his arms. The sight didn't make the fiancé angry. He realized instantly that he *wanted to believe that it was true*, and as there was nothing theatrical in the young Westerner, he sprang up, slang so much a part of his nature that the first words that came to his lips were a phrase in vogue.

"Look who's here!" he cried, and came blithely forward, his head clear, his lips smiling.

The duchess gave a little scream, and Dan lounged up to the two people and held his hand frankly out to the lady.

"That's all right, Lily! Go right on, Gordon, please. Only I had to let you know when I waked up! I must have been asleep quite a while."

The Duchess of Breakwater shrugged. "I don't know what you dreamed," she said acidly, "if you were asleep."

"Well, it was a very pretty dream," the boy returned, "and showed what a stupid ass I've been to think I couldn't have dreamed it when I was awake."

"I think you are crazy," the duchess said.

But Blair repeated: "That's all right. I mean to say, as far as I am concerned——"

And Galorey, in order to stand by his lady, murmured:

"My dear chap, you *have* been dreaming."

"Dan," the Duchess of Breakwater broke in, "let Gordon take you home, like a dear. You're really raggin' on in a ridiculous way."

Blair looked at her steadily, and as he did so, he repeated:

"That's all right, Lily. Gordon cares a lot, and the truth of the matter is, that I *do not*."

She grew very pale.

"I would have stuck to my word, of course," he went on, "but we'd have been infernally unhappy and ended up in the divorce courts. Now, this little scene here of yours lets me out, and I don't lay it up against either of you."

"Gordon!" she appealed to her lover. "Why, in Heaven's name, don't you speak?"

The Englishman realized that, while he was glad at heart, he regretted that he had been the means of her losing the chance of her life.

"What do you want me to say, Lily?" he exclaimed, with a desperate gesture. "I can't tell him I don't love you. I have loved you, God help me, for ten years."

She could have killed him for it.

"I can tell you, Dan, if you want me to," Galorey went on, "that I don't believe she cares a penny for any one on the face of the earth, for you or me."

Old Dan Blair's son showed his business training. His one idea was to "get out," and as he didn't care who the Duchess of Breakwater loved or didn't love, he wanted to break away as fast

as he could. He sat down at the table under the lamp and drew out his wallet with its compact, thick little check book, the millionaire's pass to most of the things that he wants.

"You've taught me a lot," he said to the Duchess of Breakwater, "and my father sent me over here for that. I have been awfully fond of you, too. I thought I was fonder than I guess I am. At any rate, I want to stand by one of my promises. That old place of yours—Stainer Court—now that's got to be fixed up."

He made a few computations on paper, lifted the pad to her with the figures on it, round, generous, and full.

"At home," he said, "in Blairtown, we have what we call 'engagement parties,' when each fellow brings a present to the girl; now, this is what we might call a 'broken engagement party.' Now, I can't," the boy went on, "give this money to you very well; it won't look right. We will have to fix that up some way or other. You will have to say you got an unexpected inheritance from some uncle in Australia." He smiled at Galorey: "We will fix them up together."

His candor, his simplicity, were so charming, he stood before the two so young, so clear, so clean, that a sudden tenderness for him, and a sense of what she had lost, and she never had had, made her exclaim:

"Dan, I really don't care a pin for the money—I don't!" But the hand she held out was seized by the other man and held fast.

Galorey said: "Very well, let it go at that. You don't care for the money, but you will take it just the same. Now don't, for God's sake, tell him that you care for him."

He made her meet his eyes this time; stronger than she, Galorey forced her to be sincere. She set Dan free, and he turned and left them standing there facing each other. He softly crossed the room, and he looked back and saw them, tall, distinguished both of them, under the lamplight—enemies, and yet the closest friends, bound by the strongest tie in the world.

As Dan went out through the curtains of the room and they fell behind him, the Duchess of Breakwater sank down in the chair by the side of the table; she buried her face. Gordon Galorey bent over her, and again took her in his arms, and she suffered it.

It was one o'clock. Blair called a hansom and told the driver to take him to the Carlton, and leaning back in the vehicle he breathed a long sigh. He thought over what he had left, stopped longest in pitying Galorey, then went into the Carlton restaurant to order some supper, for he began to feel the need of food. He had not time to drink his wine and partake of the cold pheasant before he saw that opposite him the two people who had taken their table were Letty Lane and Poniotowsky. The woman's slender back was turned to Blair, and his heart gave a leap of pain at the sight of the man with her, and the cruel suffering began again.

Dan gave up the idea of eating; drank a whole glass of champagne, then pushed it away from him violently. When those two got up to go, however, he would go with them; that was sure! He could never see them go out together again; no—no—no! As his brain grew a bit clearer, he saw that they were having a heated discussion between them, and as the room emptied finally, save for themselves, Dan, though he could not hear what Poniotowsky said, understood that he was urging something which the girl did not wish to grant. When they left he arose as well, and at the door of the restaurant the actress and her companion paused, and Dan saw her face, deadly pale. There were tears in her eyes.

"For God's sake," he heard her murmur, and she impatiently drew her cloak around her shoulders. Poniotowsky put out his hand to help her, but she drew back from him, exclaiming violently: "Oh, no—no!"

Before he was aware what he was doing, Dan was holding his hand out to Miss Lane.

How she turned to him! God of dreams! How she took in one cold hand his hand; just the grasp a man needs to lead him to offer the service of his life. Her hand was icy—it thrilled him to his marrow.

"Oh—you—" she breathed. "Hello!"

No words could have been more commonplace, less in the category of dramatic or poetic welcome, but they were music to the boy, and when the actress looked at him with a pale smile on her trembling lips, Dan was sure there was some kind of blessing in the smile.

"I am going to see you home," he said with determination, and she caught at it:

"Yes, yes, do! Will you?"

The third member of the party had not spoken. A servant fetched him a light to which he bent, touching his cigar. Then he lifted his head—a handsome one—with its cold and indifferent eyes, to Letty Lane.

"Good night, Miss Lane." A deep color crept under his dark skin.

"Come," said the actress eagerly, "come along; my motor is out there, and I am crazy tired. That is all there is about it. Come along."

Snatched from a marriage contract, still bitter from his jealous anger, this—to be alone with her—by the side of this white, fragrant, wonderful creature—to have been turned to by her, to be alone with her, the Duchess of Breakwater out of his horizon, Poniotowsky gone—oh, it was sweet to him! They had rolled out of the Carlton down toward the square, and he put his arm around her waist, his voice shook.

"You are dead tired! And when I saw that brute with you to-night, I could have shot him."

"Take your arm away, please."

"Why?"

"Take it away. I don't like it. Let my hand go. What's the matter with you? I thought I could trust you."

He said humbly: "You can—certainly you can."

"I am tired—tired—tired!"

Under his breath, he said: "Put your head on my shoulder, Letty, darling."

And she turned on him nearly as violently as she had on Poniotowsky, and burst into tears, crouching almost in the corner of the motor away from him, both her hands upon her breast.

"Oh, can't you see how you bother me? Can't you see I want to rest and be all alone? You are like them all—like them all. Can't I rest anywhere?"

The very words she used were those he had thought of when he saw her dance at the theatre, and his heart broke within him.

"You can," he stammered, "rest right here. God knows I want you to rest more than anything. I won't touch you or breathe again or do anything you don't want me to."

She covered her face with her hands and sat so, without speaking to him. The light was lit in her motor, and it shone over her like one kindly star, as, wrapped in her filmy things, she lay like a white rose blown into a sheltered nook by a storm. After a little she wiped her eyes, and said more naturally:

"You look perfectly dreadfully, boy! What have you been doing with yourself?"

They had reached the Savoy. It seemed to Dan they were always just driving up to where some one opened a door, out of which she was to fly away from him. He got out before her, and helped her from the car.

"Well, I've got a piece of news to tell you. I have broken my engagement with the Duchess of Breakwater."

This brought her back far enough into life to make her exclaim: "Oh, I am glad! That's perfectly fine! I don't know when I've heard anything that pleased me so much. Come and see me to-morrow and tell me all about it."

CHAPTER XV.

Dan did not fall asleep until morning, and then he dreamed of Blairtown, and the church, and a summer evening, and something like the drone of the flies on the window pane soothed him, and came into his waking

thoughts, for at noon he was violently shaken by the shoulder, and a man's voice called him as he opened his eyes and looked into Ruggles' face.

"Gee-whittaker!", Ruggles exclaimed. "You are one of the seven sleepers! I've been here something like seventeen minutes, whistling and making all kind of barnyard noises."

As Dan welcomed him, rubbing the sleep from his eyes, Ruggles told him that he had come over "the pond" just for the wedding.

"There isn't going to be any wedding, Josh! Got out of all that last night."

Ruggles had the breakfast card in his hand, which the waiter had fetched in, and Dan, taking it from his friend, ordered a big breakfast.

"I'm as hungry as the dickens, Rug, and I guess you are, too."

"What was the matter with the duchess?" Ruggles asked. "Were you too young for her, or not rich enough?"

Significantly the boy answered: "One too many, Josh," and Ruggles winced at the response.

"Here are the fellows with my trunks and things," he announced, as the porters came in with his luggage. "Just drop them there, boys; they're going to fix some kind of a room later."

Blair's long silk coat lay on a chair where he had flung it, his hat beside it, and Ruggles went over to the corner and lifted up a fragrant glove. It was one of Letty Lane's gloves which Dan had found in the motor and taken possession of. The young man had gone to his dressing room, and began running his bath, and Ruggles, laying the glove on the table, said to himself:

"I knew he would get rid of the duchess, all right."

But when Dan came back into the room later, in his dressing gown, for breakfast, Ruggles said:

"You'll have to send her back her glove, Danny."

At the sight of it beside the breakfast tray, Dan blushed scarlet. He picked up the fragrant object.

"That's all right; I'll take care of it."

"Is 'Mandalay' running the same as

ever?" Ruggles asked over his bacon and eggs.

"Same as ever."

Ruggles saw he had not returned in vain, and that he was destined to take up his part of the business, just as he had laid it out for himself to Lord Galorey. "It's up to me now; I'll have to take care of the singer, and I'm darned if I haven't got a job. If Dan colors up like that at the sight of her glove, I wonder what he does when he holds her hand!"

When Dan, on the minute of two, went to the Savoy, Higgins, as was her custom, did not meet him. The lady met him herself. Miss Lane read a letter by the table, and when Dan was announced she put it back in its envelope. Blair had seen her only in soft, clinging evening dresses, in white visionary clothes, or in her dazzling part costume, where the play dress of the dancer displayed her beauty and her charms. To-day she wore a tailor-made gown, and in her dark cloth dress, in her small hat, she seemed a new woman—some one he hadn't known and did not know, and he experienced the thrill a man always feels when the woman he loves appears in an unaccustomed dress and suggests a new mystery.

"Oh, I say! You're not going out, are you?"

In the lapel of her close little coat was a flower he had given her. He wanted to lean forward and kiss it as it rested there. She assured him:

"I have just come in; had an early lunch and took a long walk—think of it! I haven't taken a walk alone since I can remember!"

Her walk had given her only the ghost of a flush, which rose over her delicate skin, fading away like a furling flag. Her frailness, her slenderness, the air of good breeding her dress gave her, added to Dan's deepening emotions. She seemed infinitely dear, and a thing to be protected and fostered.

"Can't you sit down for a minute? I've come to make you a real call."

"Of course," she laughed. "But, first, I must answer this letter."

His jealousy rose and he caught hold of her hand that held the envelope. "Look here, you are not to write it if it is to that damned scoundrel. I took you away from him last night and you are never to see him again."

For the first time the two really looked at each other. Her lips parted as though she would reprove him, and the boy murmured:

"That's all right. I mean what I say—never to see him again! Will you promise me? Promise me—I can't bear it. I won't have it!"

A film of emotion crossed his clear young eyes, and her slender hands were held fast in his clasp. His face was beautiful in its tenderness and in a righteous anger as he bent it on her. Instead of reproving him as she had done before, instead of snatching away her hands, she swayed, and at the sight of her weakness his eyes cleared, and the film lifted like a curtain. Dan caught her in her dark dress, the flowers in her bodice, to his heart. He kissed her first timidly, wonderingly, with the sacrament of first love on his lips. Then he kissed her as his heart bade him, and when he set her free she was crying, but the tears on his face were not all her tears.

"Little boy, how crazy; how perfectly crazy! Oh, Dan—Dan!"

She clung to him, looking up at him just as his boy-dreams had told him a girl would look some day.

The boy laughed aloud, the laugh of happy youth.

"I've said a lot of stuff, and I am likely to say a lot more, but I want you to say something to me. Don't you love me?"

The word on his lips to him was as strange, as wonderful, as though it had been made for him.

"I guess I must love you, Dan. I guess I must have for a long time."

"God, I'm so glad! How long?"

"Why, ever since you used to come to the soda fountain and ask for choc-

olate. You don't know how sweet you were when you were a little boy."

She put her slender hand against his hot cheek. "And you are nothing but a little boy now! I think I must be crazy!"

As he protested, as she listened intently to what his emotion taught him to say to her, she whispered close to his ear:

"What will you take, little boy?"

And he answered: "I'll take you—you!"

At a slight sound in the next room Letty Lane started as though the interruption really brought her to her senses, put her hand to her disheveled hair, and before she could prevent it, Dan had called Mrs. Higgins to "come in," and the woman, in response, came into the sitting room. The boy went up to her and took her hands eagerly, and said:

"It's all right, all right, Mrs. Higgins. Just think of it; she belongs to me!"

"Oh, don't be a perfect lunatic, Dan," the actress exclaimed, half laughing, half crying, "and don't listen to him, Higgins. He's just crazy."

But the old woman's eyes went bright at the boy's face and tone. "I never was so glad of anything in my life."

"As of what?" asked her mistress sharply, and the tone was so cold and so suddenly altered that Dan felt a chill of despair.

"Why, at what Mr. Blair says, miss."

"Then," said her mistress, "you ought to be ashamed of yourself. He's only twenty-two, he doesn't know anything about life. You must be crazy. He's as mad as a March hare and he ought to be in school."

Then, to their consternation, she burst into a passion of weeping; threw herself on Higgins' breast and begged her to send Dan away—to send everybody away—and to let her die in peace.

In utter despair the boy obeyed the dresser's motion to go, and his transport was changed into anxiety and dread.

He lived through a week of bliss and of torture. One minute she promised to marry him, give up the stage, go around the world on a yacht, whose luxuries, Dan planned, should rival any boat ever built, or they would motor across Asia, and see, one by one, the various coral strands and the golden sands of the East.

Then, again, she would say that she loved the stage and her art, wouldn't give it up for any one in the world; that it was fatal to marry an actress; that it was mad for him to think of marrying her, anyway; that she didn't want to marry any one and be tied down; that she wanted to be her own mistress and free.

He found her a creature of a thousand whims and caprices, quick to cry, quick to laugh, divine in everything she did. He never knew what she would want him to do next, or how her mood would change, and after one of their happiest hours, when she had been like a girl with him, she would burst into tears, beg him to leave the room, telling him that she was tired—tired—tired, and wanted to go to sleep and to never wake up again.

Between them was the figure of Poniotowsky, though neither spoke of him. She appeared to have forgotten him. Dan would rather have cut out his tongue than to speak his name, and yet he was there in the minds of each.

Dan had made his arrangements with Galorey peacefully, coolly. And between the two men it had been understood that the world should think the engagement broken by the duchess. And Dan's attention to Letty Lane, already the subject of much comment, already conspicuous, was enough to justify any woman in taking offense.

The ring he had given the Duchess of Breakwater had been her own choice, a ruby. He had asked her, through Galorey, to keep it, and to wear it later, when she could think of him kindly, in an ornament of some kind or another. The duchess had not refused. The ring he bought for Letty Lane, although there was no engagement announced between them,

was the largest, purest diamond he could *with decency* ask her to put upon her hand. It sparkled like a great drop of clear water from some fountain on a magic continent. In another shop, strands of pink coral set through with diamonds caught his fancy, and he bought her yards of them, ropes of them, smiling to think how his boyhood's dreams were come true.

He never saw Ruggles except at meals, hardly spoke to the poor man at all, and the boy's absorbed face, his state of mind, made the older man feel like death. He repeated to himself that he was too late; too late, and usually wound up his reflections by ejaculating:

"Gosh almighty, I'm glad I haven't got a son!"

CHAPTER XVI.

Ruggles, as he waited for her in that flower-filled room, as he glanced at the photographs of women like herself, in costumes more or less frank, more or less vulgar, felt as though he wanted to knock down the walls and let in a big view of the West, of Montana, of the hills. With such a setting he thought he could better talk with the lady whom he had come to see.

Miss Lane kept him waiting ten minutes, and they were hours to her guest. He was afraid every minute that Dan would come in.

She came into the sitting room at length. She wore a short walking skirt of heavy serge, a simple shirt-waist belted around, a sailor hat on her beautiful little head. She was unjeweled and unpainted, very pale and very sweet. If it had not been for the marks of fatigue under her eyes, she would not have looked more than eighteen. On her left hand a single diamond, clear as water, caught the refracted light.

"How de do? Glad you are back again."

She gave him a big chair and sat down before him, smiling, leaning her elbows on her knees. She sank her face upon her hands and looked at

him, not coquettishly in the least, but as a child might have looked. From her small feet to her golden head she was utterly charming.

Ruggles made himself think of Dan. Miss Lane spoke slowly, nodding toward him, in her languid voice: "It's no use, Mr. Ruggles; no use."

Holding her face between her hands, her eyes gray as winter's seas, and as profound, she looked at him intently; then, in a flash, she changed her position and instantly transformed her character. He saw that she was a woman, not an eighteen-year-old girl, but a woman, clever, poised, witty, understanding, and that she might have been twenty years older than the boy.

"I'm sorry you spoke so quick," he said.

"I knew," she interrupted, "just what you wanted to say from the start. I couldn't help it, could I? I knew you would want to come and see me about it. It isn't any use. I know just what you are going to say."

"No, ma'am," he returned, "I don't believe you do—bright as you are. Dan's father and me were chums. We went through pretty much together, and I know how he felt on most points. He was a man of few words, but I know he counted on me to stand by the boy."

Ruggles was so chivalrous that his rôle at present cost him keen discomfort.

"Now," he continued, leaning forward a trifle toward her languid, half-interested figure, "I just want you to think of him as a little boy. He's only twenty-two. He knows nothing of the world. The money you give to the poor doesn't come so hard perhaps as this will. It's a big sacrifice, but I want you to let the boy go."

Letty Lane was silent for a moment. "If she acted well and danced well, it was hard for her to talk. She was evidently under strong emotion, and it needed her control not to burst into tears and lose her chance.

"Of course, I know the things you have heard. Of course, I know what is said about me." She stopped.

Ruggles didn't press her any further; he didn't ask her if the things were true. Looking at her as he did, watching her as he did, there was in him a feeling so new, so troubling that he found himself more anxious to protect her than to bring her to justice.

"There are worse, far worse women than I am, Mr. Ruggles. I will never do Dan any harm."

Here her visitor leaned forward and put one of his big hands lightly over one of hers, patted it a moment, and said:

"I want you to do a great deal better than that."

She had picked up a photograph off the table, a pretty picture of herself in "Mandalay," and turned it nervously between her fingers, as she said with irritation:

"I haven't been in the theatrical world not to guess at this 'Worried Father' act, Mr. Ruggles. I told you I knew just what you were going to say."

"Wrong," he repeated, "the business is old enough perhaps—lots of good jobs are old—but *this* is a little different."

He took the turning picture and laid it on the table, and quietly possessed himself of the small cold hands. Blair's solitaire shone up to him. Ruggles looked into Letty Lane's eyes.

"You have seen so much," he urged. "So many fellows. You have been such a queen, I dare say you could get any man you wanted."

"I have never seen any one like Dan."

"Just so; he ain't your kind. That is what I am trying to tell you."

She withdrew her hand from him violently.

"There you are wrong. He is my kind. He is what I like, and he is what I want to be like."

A wave of red dyed her face, and, in a tone more passionate than she had ever used to her lover, she said to Ruggles:

"I love him—I love him!"

Her words sent something like a sword through the older man's heart.

He said gently: "Don't say it. He don't know what love means yet."

He wanted to tell her that the girl Dan married should be the kind of woman his mother was, but Ruggles couldn't bring himself to say the words. Now, as he sat near her, he was growing so complex that his brain was turning round. He heard her murmur:

"I told you I knew your act, Mr. Ruggles. It isn't any use."

This brought him back to his position, and once more he leaned toward her, and, in a different tone to the one he had intended to use, murmured:

"You don't know. You haven't any idea. Now, I am going to trust you with something, and I know you will keep my secret for me. This shows you a little bit of what I think about you. Dan Blair hasn't got a red cent. He has nothing but what I give him. There's a false title to all that land on the Bentley claim. The whole thing came up when I was home, and the original company, of which I own three-quarters of the stock, holds the clear titles to the Blairtown mines. It all belongs now to me, if I choose to present my documents. Dan knows nothing about this—not a word."

The actress had never come up to such a dramatic point in any of her plays. With her hands folded in her lap she looked at him steadily, and he could not understand the expression that crossed her face. He heard her exclamation: "Oh, gracious!"

"I've brought the papers back with me," said the Westerner, "and it is between you and me how we act. If Dan marries you I will be bound to do what old Blair would have done—cut him off—let him feel his feet on the ground, and the result of his own folly."

He had taken his glasses off while he made this assertion. Now he put them on again.

"If you give him up I'll divide with the boy," he concluded.

She seemed to have forgotten him entirely, and he caught his breath when she turned about abruptly and said:

"My goodness, how Dan will hate being poor! He will have to sell all his stickpins and his motor cars and all the things he has given me. It will be quite a little to start on, but he will hate it, he is so very smart."

"Why, you don't mean to say——" Ruggles gasped.

With a charming smile as she rose to put their conversation at an end, she said:

"Why, you don't mean to say that you thought I *wouldn't stand by him?*"

She seemed, as she put her hands upon her hips with something of a defiant look at the older man; as though she just then stood by her pauperized lover.

"I thought you cared some for the boy," Ruggles said.

"Well, I am showing it."

"You want to ruin him to show it, do you? I am darn glad the old man is dead; I am glad his mother's dead, and I am glad I have got no son."

The next moment she was at his side, and he felt that she clung to his arm, her sensitive, beautiful face raised to his, all drawn with emotion.

"Oh, you'll kill me—you'll kill me! Just look how very ill I am; you are making me crazy. I just worship him."

"Give him up, then," said Ruggles steadily.

She faltered: "I can't—I can't—it won't be for long"—with a terrible pathos in her voice. "You don't know how different I can be; you don't know what a new life we were going to lead."

Stammering, and with intense meaning, Ruggles, looking down at her, said: "My dear child—my dear child!"

In his few words something perhaps made her see in a flash her past and what the question really was. She dropped Ruggles' arm. She stood for a moment with her arms folded across her breast, her head bent down, and the man at the door waited, feeling that Dan's whole life was in the balance of the moment. When she spoke again her voice was hard and entirely devoid of the lovely appealing quality,

which brought her so much admiration from the public.

"If I give him up," she said slowly, "what will you do?"

"Why," he answered, "I'll divide with Dan, let things stand just as they are."

She thought again a moment, and then as if she did not want him to witness—to detect the struggle she was going through, she turned away and walked over toward the window and dismissed him from there.

"Please go, will you? I want very much to be alone and to think."

He had not got upstairs to his rooms at the Carlton before a note was handed him from the actress, bidding him to return at once to the Savoy, and Ruggles, his heart hammering like a triphammer, rushed up to his rooms, made an evening toilet, for it was then half-past seven, and red almost to apoplexy, nervous, and full of emotion, he returned to the rooms he had left not three hours before.

The three hours had been busy ones at the actress' apartment. Letty Lane's sitting room was full of trunks, dressing bags, and traveling paraphernalia. She came forward out of what seemed a world of confusion, dressed as though for a journey, even her veil and her gloves denoting her departure. She spoke hurriedly and almost without politeness.

"I have sent for you to come and see me here. Not a soul in London knows I am going away. There will be a dreadful row at the theatre, but that's none of your affairs. Now, I want you to tell me before I go just what you are going to do for Dan."

"Who are you going with?" Ruggles asked shortly, and she flashed at him:

"Well, really, I don't think that is any of your business. When you drive a woman as you have driven me, she will go far. But that is neither here nor there. What I want to know is, what you are going to do for Dan?"

"I told you I would share with him."

"Then he will be nearly as rich?"

"He'll have more than is good for him."

That satisfied her. Then she pursued: "I want you to stand by him. He will need you."

Ruggles lifted the hand he held and kissed it reverently. "I'll do anything you say—anything you say."

Downstairs in the Savoy, as Dan had done countless times, Ruggles waited until he saw her motor car carry her and her small luggage and Higgins away.

In their sitting room in the Carlton a half hour later the door was thrown open and Dan Blair came in like a madman. Without preamble he seized Ruggles by the arm.

"Look here," he cried, "what have you been doing? Tell me now, and tell me the truth, or, by God, I don't know what I'll do. You went to the Savoy. You went there twice. Anyhow, where is she? Speak to me. Where has she gone?" He stared in the Westerner's face, his eyes blood-shot. "Why in thunder don't you say something?"

And Ruggles prayed for some power to unloose his thickening tongue.

"You say she's gone?" he questioned.

"I say," said the boy, "that you've been meddling in my affairs with the woman I love. I don't know what you have said to her, but it's only your age that keeps me from striking you. Don't you know," he cried, "that you are spoiling my life? Don't you know that?"

A torrent of feeling coming to his lips, his eyes suffused, the tears rolled down his face. He walked away into his own room, remained there a few moments, and when he came out again he carried in his hand his valise, which he put down with a bang on the table. More calmly, but still in great anger, he said to his father's friend:

"Now, can you tell me what you've done or not?"

"Dan," said Ruggles, with difficulty, "if you will sit down a moment we can——"

The boy laughed in his face. "Sit

down!" he cried. "Why, I think you must have lost your reason. I have chartered a motor car out there and the damned thing has burst a tire, and they are fixing it up for me. It will be ready in about two minutes, and then I am going to follow wherever she has gone. She crossed to Paris, but I can get there before she can even with this damned accident. But, before I go, I want you to tell me what you said."

"Why," said Ruggles quietly, "I told her you were poor, and she turned you down."

His words were faint.

"God!" said the boy under his breath. "That's the way you think about truth. Lie to a woman to save my precious soul, but I expect you think she is so immoral and so bad that she will hurt me. Well," with great emphasis, "she has never done anything in her life that comes up to what you've done. Never! And nothing has ever hurt me so." His lips trembled. "I have lost my respect for you, for my father's friend, and as far as she is concerned, I don't care what she marries me for. She has got to marry me, and if she doesn't——"

He had no idea, in his passion, what he was saying or how.

"Why, I think I'll kill you first and then blow my own brains out!"

And with these mad words he grabbed up his valise and bolted from the room, and Ruggles could hear his running feet tearing down the corridor.

CHAPTER XVII.

Spring in Paris, which comes in a fashion so divine that even the most calloused and indifferent are impressed by its beauty, awakened no answering response in the heart of the young man, who, from his hotel window, looked out on the desecrated gardens of the Tuileries. He had missed the boat across the Channel taken by Letty Lane, and the delay had made him lose what little trace of her he had. In the early hours of the morning he had flung himself in at the St.

James, taken the indifferent room they could give him in the crowded season, and excited as he was he slept and did not waken until noon.

Blair thought it would be a matter of a few hours only to find the whereabouts of the celebrated actress, but it was not such an easy job. He had not guessed that she might be traveling incognito, and at none of the hotels could he hear news of her, nor did he pass her in the crowded, noisy, rustling, crying streets, though he searched motors for her with eager eyes, and haunted restaurants and cafés, and went everywhere that he thought she might be likely to be.

At the end of the third day, unsuccessful and in despair, the unhappy young lover started out, determined that night should not fall until he found the woman he sought. Nor did it, though the afternoon wore on, and Dan, pursuing his old trails, wandered from worldly meeting place to worldly meeting place. Finally, toward six o'clock, he saw the lengthening shadows steal into the woods of the Bois de Boulogne, and in one of the smaller alleys, where the green-trunked trees and their forests are full of purple shadows and yellow sun disk, flickering down, he picked up a small iron chair and sat himself down, with a long sigh, to rest.

While he sat there, watching the end of the alley as it gave out into the broader road, a beautiful red motor rolled up to the conjunction of the two ways, and Letty Lane, in a summer frock, got out alone. She had a flowing white veil around her head and a flowing white scarf around her shoulders. She was all in white—like a dove. But her costume was made vivid and picturesque by the coral parasol she carried and a pair of coral-colored kid shoes, and he saw that he observed her before she did him; that around her neck and falling in its long chain, she wore his coral beads. All this Dan saw before he dashed into the road, came up to her with something like a cry on his lips, bareheaded, for his hat was by his chair in the woods.

Letty Lane's hands went to her heart and her face took on a deadly pallor. She did not seem glad to see him. Out of his passionate description of the hours that he had been through, of how he had looked for her, of what he thought and wanted and felt, the actress made what she could, listening to him as they both stood there under the shadows of the green trees. Scanning her face for some sign that she loved him, for it was all he cared for, Dan saw no such indication there. He finished with:

"You know what Ruggles told you was a lie. Of course, I've got money enough to give you everything you want. He's a lunatic and ought to be shut up."

"It may have been a lie, all right," she said, with forced indifference. "I've had time to think it over. You are too young. You don't know what you want." She stopped his protestations. "Well, then, I am too old, and I don't want to be tied down."

When he pressed her to tell him whether or not she had ceased to care for him, she shook her head slowly, marking on the ground fine tracery with the end of her coral parasol. He had been obliged to take her back to the red motor, but before they were in earshot of her servants, he said:

"Now, you know just what you have done to me, you and Ruggles between you. For my father's sake and the things I believed in I've kept pretty straight as things go." He nodded at her, with boyish egotism, throwing all the blame on her. "I want you to understand that from now, right now, I'm going to the dogs just as fast as I can get there, and it won't be a very gratifying result to anybody that ever cared."

She touched his arm.

"No," she murmured. "No, boy, you are not going to do any such thing."

This much from her was enough for him. He caught her hand and cried: "Then you marry me. What do we care for anybody else in the world?"

"Go back and get your hat and stick

and gloves," she commanded, keeping down the tears.

"No, no, you come with me, Letty; I'm not going to let you run to your motor and escape me again."

"Go; I'll wait here," she promised. "I give you my word."

As he snatched up the inanimate objects from the leaf-strewn ground where he had thrown them in despair, he thought how things can change in a quarter of an hour. For he had hope now, as he hurried back, as he walked with her to her car, as he saw the little coral shoes stir in the leaves when she passed under the trees. The little coral shoes trod on his heart, but now it was light under her feet!

Jubilant to have overcome the fate which had tried to keep her hidden from him in Paris, he could hardly believe his eyes that she was before them again, and, as they rolled into the Avenue des Acacias, he asked her the question uppermost in his mind:

"Are you alone in Paris, Letty?"

"Don't you count?"

"No—no—honestly, you know what I mean."

"You haven't any right to ask me that."

"I have—I have. You gave me a right. You're engaged to me, aren't you? Gosh, you haven't forgotten, have you? Are you alone in Paris, Letty?"

And she said: "Oh, what a bore you are. You're the most obstinate creature. Well, I am alone, but that had nothing to do with you."

A glorious light broke over his face; his relief was tremendous.

"Oh, thank God!" he breathed.

"Poniotowsky"—and she said his name with difficulty—"is coming to-night from Carlsbad."

The boy threw back his bright head and laughed wildly.

"Curse him! The very name makes me want to commit a crime. He will go over my body to you. You hear me, Letty. I mean what I say."

People had already remarked them as they passed. The actress was too well known to pass unobserved, but she

was indifferent to their curiosity or to the existence of any one but this excited boy.

Blair, who had not opened a paper since he came to Paris, did not know that Letty Lane's flight from London had created a scandal in the theatrical world, that her manager was suing her, and that to be seen with her driving in the Bois was a conspicuous thing, indeed; she thought of it, however.

"I am going to tell the man to drive you to the gate on the other side of the park where it's quieter; we won't be stared at; and then I want you to leave me and let me go to the Meurice alone. Let me go to the hotel alone."

He laughed again in the same strained fashion.

"Look here. You don't suppose I am going to let you go like this, now that I have seen you again? You don't suppose I am going to give you up to that infamous scoundrel? You have got to marry me."

Bringing all her strength of character to bear, she exclaimed: "I expect you think you are the only person who has asked me to marry him. Dan. I am going to marry Prince Poniotowsky. He is perfectly crazy about me."

Until that moment she had not made him think that she was indifferent to him, and the idea that such a thing was possible, was too much for his overstrained heart to bear. Dan cried her name in a voice whose appeal was like a hurt creature's, and as the hurt creature in its suffering sometimes springs upon its torturer, he flung his arms around her as she sat in the motor, held her and kissed her, then set her free, and as the motor flew along, tore open the door to spring out or to throw himself out, but clinging to him she prevented his mad act. She stopped the car along the edge of the quiet, wooded allée. Blair saw that he had terrified her. She covered her beating heart with her hands, and gasped at him that he was "crazy, crazy," and perhaps a little late, his dignity and self-possession returned.

"I am mad," he acknowledged more

calmly, "and I am sorry that I frightened you. But you drive me mad."

Without further word he got out and left her agitated, leaning toward him, and Blair, less pale and thoroughly the man, lifted his hat to her, and, with unusual grace, bowed good night and good-by. Then, rushing as he had come, he walked off down through the allée, his gray figure in his gray clothes disappearing through the vista of meeting trees.

For a moment she stared after him, her eyes fastened on the tall, slender, beautiful young man. Blair's fire and ardor, his fresh youthfulness, his protection and his chivalry, his ardent devotion, touched her profoundly. Tears fell, and one splashed on her white glove. Was he really going to ruin his life? The ballad of the "Earl of Moray" ran through her head: "And long may his lady look from the castle wall." Dan had neither title, nor, according to Ruggles, had he any money, and she could marry the prince; but Dan, as he walked so fast away, misery snapping at his heels as he went, stamping through the woods, seemed glorious to Letty Lane, and the only one she wanted in the world.

What if anything should happen to him really? What if he should really start out to do the town according to the fashion of his Anglo-Saxon brothers, but more desperately still? She took a card from the case in the corner of the car, scribbled a few words, told the man to drive around the curve and meet the outlet of the path where Dan had gone "stauning through." When she saw him within reaching distance she sent the chauffeur, across the woods to give Mr. Blair her scribbled word, and consoled herself with the belief that Dan wouldn't "go to the dogs or throw himself in the river until he had seen her again."

CHAPTER XVIII.

At the Meurice, Miss Lane gave strict orders to admit only Mr. Blair to her apartments. She described him. No sooner had she drunk her cup of

tea, which Higgins gave her, than she began to expect Dan.

He didn't come.

Her dinner, without much appetite, she ate alone in her salon; looked out to the warm, bright gardens of the Tuileries fading into the pallid loveliness of sunset, indifferent to everything in the world—except Dan Blair. She believed she would soon be indifferent to him, too; then, everything would be done with. Now she wondered had he really gone—had he done what he threatened? Why didn't he come? At twelve o'clock that night, as she lay amongst the cushions of her sofa dozing, the door of her parlor was pushed in; she sprang up with a cry of delight; but when Poniotowsky came up to her she exclaimed:

"Oh, you!" And the languor and boredom with which she said his name made the prince laugh shortly.

"Yes, I. Who did you think it was?"

Cynically and rather cruelly he looked down at Letty Lane, and admired the picture she made; small, exquisite, her blonde head against the dark velvet of the lounge, her gray eyes intensified by the fatigue under them.

"Just got in from Carlsbad; came directly here. How de do? You look, you know"—he scrutinized her through his single eyeglass—"most frightfully seedy."

"Oh, I'm all right." She left the sofa, for she wanted to prevent his nearer approach. "Have you had any supper? I'll call Higgins."

"No, no; sit down, please, will you? I want to know why you sent to Carlsbad for me? Have you come to your senses?"

He was as mad about the beautiful creature as a man of his temperament could be. Exhausted by excess and bored with life, she charmed and amused him, and in order to have her with him always, to be master of her caprices, he was willing to make any sacrifice.

"Have you sent off that imbecile boy?" And at her look he stopped and shrugged. "You need a rest, my child,"

he murmured practically, "you're neurasthenic and very ill. I've wired to have the yacht at Cherbourg. It'll reach there by noon to-morrow."

She was standing listlessly by the table on which were a mass of letters sent by special messenger from London after her, telegrams and cards in a pile. Looking down at the lot, she murmured: "All right, I don't care."

He concealed his triumph, but before the look had faded from his face she saw it, and exclaimed sharply:

"Don't be crazy about it, you know. You'll have to pay high for me. You know what I mean."

He answered gallantly: "My dear child, I've told you that you would be the most charming princess in Hungary."

Once more she accepted indifferently: "All right, all right, I don't care tuppence—not tuppence"—and she snapped her fingers—"but I like to see you pay, Frederigo. Take me to Maxim's."

He demurred, saying she was far too ill, but she turned from him to call Higgins, determined to go if she had to go alone, and said to him violently: "Don't think I'll make your life easy for you, Frederigo. I'll make it wretched; as wretched"—and she held out her fragile arms, and the sleeves fell back, leaving them bare—"as wretched as I am myself."

But she was lovely, and he said harshly: "Get dressed, I'll go change and meet you at the lift."

She made him take a table in the corner, where she sat in the shadow on the sofa, overlooking the brilliant room. Maxim's was no new scene to either of them, no novelty. Poniotowsky scarcely glanced at the crowd, preferring to feast his eyes on his companion, whose indifference to him made his abstraction easy. She was his property. He would give her his title; she had demanded it from the first. He stared at Letty Lane, whose delicate beauty was in fine play; her cheeks faintly pink, her starry eyes humid with a dew whose luster is of the most pre-

cious quality. Her unshed tears had nothing to do with Poniotowsky—they were for the boy. Her heart sickened, thinking where he might be, and more than that, it cried out for him. She wanted him.

She thought Dan would drift here probably as most Americans on their wild nights do for a part of the time, and she had come to see.

She wore a dress of coral pink, tightly fitting, high to her little chin, and seemed herself like a coral strand from neck to toe, clad in the color she affected, and which had become celebrated as the Letty Lane pink. Her feathered hat hid her face, and she was completely shielded as she bent down drawing pictures with her bare finger on the cloth. After a little while she said to Poniotowsky, without glancing at him:

"If you stare any longer like that, Frederigo, you'll break your eyeglass. You know how I hate it."

Used as he was to her sharpness, he nevertheless flushed and sat back, and looked across the room, where to their right, protected from them as they were from him by the great door, a young man sat alone. Whether or not he had come to Maxim's intending to join a congenial party, should he find one, or to choose for a companion some one of the women, who, at the entrance of the tall blond boy, stirred and invited him with their raised lorgnons and their smiles, will not be known. Dan Blair was alone, pale as the pictures Letty Lane had drawn on the cloth, and he, too, feasted his eyes on the Gaiety girl.

"By Jove!" said the Hungarian under his breath.

She eagerly asked: "What? Whom? Whom do you see?"

Turning his back sharply he evaded her question, and she did not pursue the idea, and as a physical weakness overwhelmed her, when Poniotowsky, after a second, said: "Come, *chérie*, for Heaven's sake, let's go," she mechanically rose and passed out.

Several young men supping together came over eagerly to speak to her,

and claimed acquaintance with the Gaiety girl, and walked along out to the motor. There Letty Lane discovered she had dropped her handkerchief, and sent the prince back for it.

As though he had been watching for the reappearance of Poniotowsky, Dan Blair stood waiting close to the table which Letty Lane had left, her handkerchief in his hand. As Poniotowsky came up Dan thrust the small trifle of sheer linen into his waistcoat pocket.

"I will trouble you for Miss Lane's handkerchief," said Poniotowsky, his eyes cold.

"You may," said Dan as quietly, his blue eyes like sparks from a star, "trouble me for hell."

And, lifting from the table Poniotowsky's own half-emptied glass of champagne, the boy flung the contents full in the Hungarian's face.

The wine dashed against Poniotowsky's lips and in his eyes. Blair laughed out loud, his hands in his pockets. The insult was low and noiseless; the little glass shattered as it fell so softly that amongst the music its gentle crash was unheard.

Poniotowsky wiped his face tranquilly, and bowed.

"You shall hear from me after I have taken Miss Lane home."

"Tell her," said the boy, "where you left the handkerchief, that's all."

CHAPTER XIX.

The next morning very early, two strangers were ushered into Dan's room at the hotel. The boy greeted them courteously.

"Sit down, will you? Do you speak English?"

They were foreigners, but they did speak English—no doubt far more perfectly than did Dan Blair.

"Well," he asked slowly, "I expect you've come to ask me to fight with Prince Poniotowsky—yes? It's against our principles, you know, in the States—we don't do that way. Personally, I'd throw anything at him I could lay my hands on, but I don't care to have him let daylight through me, and I

don't care to kill your friend. See? I'm an American—yes, I know, I know"—he nodded sagely—"but we don't have your kind of fights out our way. It means business when we go out to shoot."

He threw his young, blond head back, and frankly told his visitors:

"I'm not up on swords; I've seen 'em in pictures, and read about them, but I'll be darned if I've ever had one in my hand."

His expression changed at the quiet response of Poniotowsky's seconds.

"*Geel*! Whew!" he exclaimed. "He does, does he? Twenty paces—revolvers—why, he's a bird—a bird!"

A slight flush rose along Dan's cheeks. "I never liked him, but you don't want to hear what I think of him. But I'll be darned if he isn't a bird."

At this moment a page came in, bringing him a blue envelope; he tore the telegram open; it was Ruggles' answer to his question. It ran:

Quite true. Tell you about it. Arrive your hotel around noon.

The dispatch informed him that he was really a pauper, and also that he had a second for his duel with Poniotowsky. His guests stood formally before the young barbarian.

"Look here," he continued amiably, "I can't meet your dago friend like this, it's not fair; he hasn't seen me shoot; it isn't for me to say it, but I can't miss. Hold," he interrupted, "he has, too. He was at the Galoreys' at that first shoot. Ah—well, I refuse; tell him so, will you? Tell him I'm an American and a cowboy, and that for me, a duel at twenty paces with a pistol would mean murder. I like his pluck—it's all right—tell him anything you like. He ought to have chosen swords. He would have had me there."

They retired as formally as they had entered, and took his answer to their client; and, after a bath and careful toilet, Dan went out, leaving a line for Ruggles, to say that he would be at the hotel to meet him at noon.

The Hungarian, in the Continental, was drinking his coffee in his room when his friends found him. He listened to what they had to say coolly; his eyeglass gave him an air of full dress even at this early hour. Only a few minutes before a letter had been brought him from Miss Lane. He was used to her caprices, which were countless, and he never left her with any certainty that he should see her again, or with any idea of what her next move would be. She wrote:

It's no use. I just can't. I've always told you so, and I mean it. I'm tired out—I want to go away and never see any one again. I want to die. I shall be dead next year, and I don't care. Please leave me alone and don't come to see me, and for Heaven's sake don't bore me with notes.

When Poniotowsky received this note, he had shrugged, and decided that if he lived after his duel with the young savage he would go to see the actress, taking a jewel or a gift; he would get her a Pomeranian dog, and all would be well. He listened coolly to his friends.

"*C'est un enfant*," one of them said.

"He is a coward," said the other.

"On the contrary," answered Poniotowsky coolly, "he shoots to perfection. You will be surprised to hear that I admire his refusal. I accept his decision, as his skill is unquestioned with arms. I choose to look upon this reply as an apology. I would like to have you inform Mr. Blair of this fact. He's young enough to be my son, and he is a barbarian. The incident is closed."

He put Letty Lane's note in his pocket, and leisurely prepared to go out on the Rue de Castiglione to buy her a Pomeranian dog.

CHAPTER XX.

Higgins let him in, and across the room Blair saw the figure of the actress against the light of the long window. Her back was to him as he came up, and, though she knew who it was, she was far from dreaming how different a man came in to see her this morning than the one she had known.

"Won't you turn around and bid me good-by?" he asked her. "I'm going away."

She gave him a languid hand, without looking at him.

"Has Higgins gone?"

"Yes. Won't you turn round and say how-de-do, and good-by? Gosh," he cried, as she turned, "how pale you are, darling!" And he took her in his arms.

"Are you very ill?" he murmured. "Speak to me—tell me—are you going to die?"

"Don't be a goose, boy."

"I've had a wire from Ruggles," Dan said. "He tells me it's true. I have nothing but my own feet to stand on, and I'm as poor as the deuce." Looking at her impressively, he added: "I only mind because it will be hard on you."

"Hard on me?"

"Yes, you'll have to start poor. Mother did with father, out there in Montana; it will be rough at first, but others have done it and been happy, and we've got each other." The eyes fixed on her were as blue as the summer skies. "Money's a darned poor thing to buy happiness with, Letty. It didn't buy me a thing fit to keep, that's the truth. I've never been so gay as I am to-day since I was born. Why, I feel," he said, and would have stretched out his arms, only he held her with them, "like a king. Later I'll have money again, all right—don't fret—and then I'll know its worth. I'll bet you weren't all unhappy there in Blairtown before you turned the heads of all those Johnnies." He put one hand against her cheek and lifted her drooping head. "Lean on me, sweet-heart," he said, with great tenderness. "It will be all right."

A coral color stole along her cheek; it rose like a sweet tide under his hand. She looked at him, fascinated.

"It's not a real tragedy," he went on. "I've got my letter of credit, and old Ruggles will let me hang on to that, and you'll find the motor cars and jewels will look like thirty cents when we stand in the door of our lit-

tle shack and look out at the Value Mine."

He lifted her hand to his lips, held it there, and the spark ignited in her; his youth and confidence, his force and passion, woke a woman in Letty Lane that had never lived before that hour.

He murmured: "I'll be there with you, darling—night and day—night and day." He brought his bright face close to hers.

She found breath to say: "What has happened to you, Dan—what?"

"I don't know," he gravely replied. "I guess I came up pretty close against it last night; things got into their right places, and then and there I knew you were the girl for me, rich or poor."

He kissed her and she passively received his caresses, so passively, so without making him any sign, that his magnificent assurance began to be shaken—his arms fell from her.

"It's quite true," he murmured. "I am poor."

She led him to the lounge and made him sit down by her; he waited for her to speak, but she remained silent, her eyes fixed on her frail hands, ringless. Tears forced themselves under her eyelids, but she kept them back.

"I guess," she said, in a veiled tone, "you've no idea all I've been through, Dan, since I stood there in the church choir."

American though he was, and down on foreign customs—he wouldn't fight a duel—he got down on his knees and put his arms around her from there.

"I know what you are, all right, Letty. You are an angel."

She gave way and burst into tears, and hid her face on his shoulder, and sobbed.

"I believe you do—I believe you do,

You've saved my soul and my life. I'll go with you—I'll go—I'll go!"

Later she told him how she would learn to cook and sew, and that together they would stand in the door of their shack at sunset, or that she would stand and watch for him to come home; and, the actress in her strong, she sprang up for a minute, and stood shielding her eyes with her slender hand to show him how. And he gazed, charmed at her, and drew her back to him again.

"You've made dad's words come true." Dan wouldn't tell her what they were; he said she wouldn't understand.

She leaned toward him; a slight shadow crossed her face, as if memories laid a darkling wing for a moment there. Such shadows must have passed, for she kissed him of her own accord upon the lips and without a sigh.

Side by side, they sat for a long time. Higgins softly opened a door, saw them, and stepped back, unheard.

Ruggles came in, and his steps in the soft carpet made no sound; and he looked at the pair long and tenderly before he spoke. They sat there before him like children, holding hands.

Letty Lane's hat lay on the floor; her hair was a halo around her pale, charming face; she had caught youth from the boy, she was laughing like a girl—they were making plans. And as the subject was Love, and there was no money in the question, and as there was sacrifice on the parts of both, it is safe to think that old Dan Blair's son was planning to purchase those things which stay above ground and persist in the hearts of us all.



A SPLENDID HAZARD

BY Harold MacGrath



SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

Fitzgerald, a young American newspaper man, who has represented his paper all over the world, happens one gloomy day to be at the Tomb of Napoleon in Paris. He notices there a beautiful American girl and her father, apparently a retired naval officer. He also encounters a certain Karl Breitmann, likewise a newspaper reporter. The two have met in Macedonia. Fitzgerald invites Breitmann to dinner. Both are great admirers of Napoleon, and the German reveals the fact that he is really a baron, but in very reduced circumstances. Monsieur Ferrand, a little oldish man, avowedly a collector of butterflies, but a member of the French secret police, has interviews with a French minister and the German chancellor in regard to a young man he has been watching for years, and who may be the cause of complications between the two countries. Fitzgerald returns to America. One day he makes a wager with some club companions that he will sell out the stock of an Italian street statue vendor. While thus engaged he is approached by a young lady who hands him a note, asking him to be at a certain house at a place in New Jersey at a certain time. He goes there and meets Admiral Killigrew and his daughter, Laura, the same he had noticed in Paris. It turns out that the admiral and Fitzgerald's father were old friends. Laura has heard mysterious rappings in a chimney and wants to discover the cause. Fitzgerald volunteers to help. It transpires that the admiral has engaged Breitmann as secretary. The two young men meet, and Breitmann tells Fitzgerald he has been unable to obtain employment on any newspaper in New York. This seems strange to Fitzgerald and he writes to New York to make inquiries. Both men are greatly attracted by Laura. One night Fitzgerald hears the tapping in the chimney. He goes downstairs to find Breitmann there before him. They investigate and find some one has certainly been tampering with the chimney. The next day the admiral has the chimney torn down, and they discover a box containing a manuscript telling of the whereabouts of a hidden treasure in Corsica—two million francs. Fitzgerald receives a telegram saying that Breitmann has never applied to any of the metropolitan dailies.

CHAPTER XI.



THE story itself was brief enough, but there was plenty of husk to the grain. The old expatriate was querulous, long-winded, not niggard with his ink when he cursed the English and damned the Prussians; and he obtained much gratification in jabbing his quill bodkin into what he termed the sniveling nobility of the old régime. Dog of dogs! Was

not he himself noble? Had not his parents and his brothers gone to the guillotine with the rest of them? But he, thank God, had no wooden mind; he could look progress and change in the face and follow their bent. And now, all the crimes and heroisms of the Revolution, all the glorious pageantry of the Empire, had come to nothing. A Bourbon, thick-skulled, sordid, worn-out, again sat upon the throne, while the Great Man languished on a rock in the Atlantic. Fools that they had been, not to have hidden the little King of Rome as against this very day! It was

pitiful. He never saw a shower in June that he did not hail curses upon it. To have lost Waterloo for a bucketful of water! Thousand thunders! Could he ever forget that terrible race back to Paris? Could he ever forget the shame of it? Grouchy for a fool and Blücher for a blundering ass. *Eh bien*, they would soon tumble the Bourbons into oblivion again.

A rambling, desultory tale. And there were reminiscences of such and such a great lady's salon; the flight from Moscow; the day of the Bastille; the poor fool of a Louis who donned a red bonnet and wore the tricolor; some new opera dancer; the flight of his cowardly cousins to Austria; Austerlitz and Jena; the mad dream in Egypt; the very day when the Great Man pulled a crown out of his saddle-bag and made himself an emperor. Just a little corporal from Corsica; think of it! And so on; all jumbled, but keyed with tremendous interest to the listeners and to Laura herself. It was the golden age of opportunity, of reward, of sudden generals and princes and dukes. All gone, nothing left but a few battle flags; England no longer shaking in her boots, and the rest of them dividing the spoils! No! There were some left, and in their hands lay the splendid enterprise.

Quietly they had pieced together this sum and that, till there was now stored away two million francs. Two or three frigates and a corvette or two; then the work would go forward. Only a little while to wait, and then they would bring their beloved chief back to France and to his own again. Had he not written: "Come for me, my braves. They say they have orders to shoot me. Come; better carry my corpse away than that I should rot here for years to come." They would come. But this year went by, and another; one by one the Old Guard died off, smaller and smaller had drawn the circle; the vile rock called St. Helena still remained impregnable.

On a certain day they came to tell him that the emperor was no more. Soon he was all alone but one; those

brave soldiers who had planned with him were no more. An alien, an outcast, he, too, longed for night. And what should he do with it, this vast treasure, every franc of which meant sacrifice and unselfishness, bravery and loyalty? Let the gold rot. He would bury all knowledge of it in yonder chimney, confident that no one would ever find the treasure, since he alone possessed the key to it, having buried it himself. So passed the greatest Caesar of them all, the most brilliant empire, the bravest army. Ah, had the King of Rome lived! Had there been some direct Napoleonic blood to take up the work! Vain dreams! The Great Man's brothers had been knaves and fools.

The narrator ended:

And so to-night I bury the casket in the chimney; within it my hopes and the few trinkets of the past of which I am an integral part. Good-by, little glen; good-by, brave old medal! I am sending a drawing of the chimney to the good Abbé le Fanu. He will outlive me. He lives on forty sous the day; treasures mean nothing to him; his cry, his eternal cry, is always of the people. He will probably tear it up. The brig will never come again. So best. Death will come soon. And I shall die unknown, unloved, forgotten. *Bon nuit!*

Mr. Donovan alone remained in normal state of mind. 'Twas all faradiddle, this talk of finding treasures. The old Frenchman had been only half baked. He dumped his tools into his bag, and, with the wisdom of his kind, departed. There would be another job to-morrow, putting the bricks back.

The others, however, were for the time but children, and like children they all talked at once; and there were laughter and thumping of fists and clapping of hands. The admiral had a new plan every five minutes. He would do this, or he would do that; and Fitzgerald would shake his head, or Breitmänn would point out the unfeasibility of the plan. Above all, he urged, there must be no publicity, with a flash toward Fitzgerald; the world must know nothing till the treasure was in their hands. Otherwise, there would surely be piracy on high seas. Two

million francs were a prize, even in these days. There were plenty of men and plenty of tramp ships. Even when they found the gold, secrecy would be best. There might be some difficulty with France. Close lips, then, till they returned to America; after that, Mr. Fitzgerald would become famous as the teller of the exploit.

"I confess that, for all my excitement," said Fitzgerald, "I am somewhat skeptical. Still, your suggestion, Mr. Breitmann, is good."

"Do you mean to say that you doubt the existence of the treasure?" cried the admiral, something impatient.

"Oh, no doubt it once existed. But seventy-five or eighty years! There were others beside this refugee Frenchman. Who knows into what hands similar documents may have fallen?"

"And the unknown man who worked in the chimney?" put in the girl quietly.

"That simply proves what I say. He knows that this treasure once existed, but not where. Now, it is perfectly logical that some other man, years ago, might have discovered the same key as we have. He may have got away with it. The man might have plausibly declared that he had made the money somewhere. The sum is not so large as to create any wide comment."

"Ah, my boy, your father had more enthusiasm than that."

"My dear admiral"—and Fitzgerald laughed in that light-hearted way of his—"I would go into the heart of inner China on a treasure hunt, for the mere fun of it. Enthusiasm? Nothing would gratify me more than to strike a shovel into the spot where this treasure, this pot of gold, is supposed to lie. It will be great sport; nothing like it. I was merely supposing. I have never heard of, or come into contact with, a man who has found a hidden treasure. I am putting up these doubts because we are never sure of anything. Why, Mr. Breitmann knows: Isn't it more fun to find a dollar in an old suit of clothes than to know you have ten in the suit you are wearing? It's not how much, it's the finding that gives the pleasure."

"That is true," echoed Breitmann generously. He fingered the papers with a touch that was almost a caress. "A pity that you will go to the Arctic instead."

"I am not quite sure that I shall go," replied Fitzgerald. That this man had deliberately lied to him rendered him indecisive. For the present he could neither do nor say anything, but he had a great desire to be on hand to watch.

"You are not your father's son if you refuse to go with us." The admiral sent home this charge with fist against palm.

"Pieces of eight! Pieces of eight!" parroted the girl drolly. "You will go, Mr. Fitzgerald."

"Do you really want me to?" cleverly putting the decision with her.

"Yes." There was no coquetry in voice or eye.

"When do you expect to go?" Fitzgerald put this question to the admiral.

"As soon as we can coal up and provision. Laura, I've just got to smoke. Will you gentlemen join me?" The two young men declined. "We can go straight to Fungal, in the Madeiras, and recoil. With the club ensign up nobody will be asking questions. We can telegraph the *Herald* whenever we touch a port. Just a pleasure cruise." The admiral fingered the Legion of Honor. "And here was Aladdin's Lamp, hanging up in my chimney!" He broke into laughter. "By cracky! That man Donovan knows his business. He's gone without putting back the bricks. He has mulcted me for two days' work."

"But crossing in the yacht," hesitated Fitzgerald. He wished to sound this man Breitmann. If he suggested obstacles and difficulties, it would be a confirmation of the telegram and his own singular doubts.

"It is likely to be a rough passage," said Breitmann experimentally.

"He doesn't want me to go." Fitzgerald stroked his chin slyly.

"We have crossed the Atlantic twice in the yacht," Laura affirmed, with a

bit of pride; "once in March, too, and a heavy sea half the way."

"Enter me as cabin boy or supercargo," said Fitzgerald. "If you don't you'll find a stowaway before two days out."

"That's the spirit." The admiral drew strongly on his cigar. He had really never been so excited since his first sea engagement. "And it all comes in so pat, Laura. We were going away in a month, anyway. Now we can notify the guests that we've cut down the time two weeks. I tell you what it is, this will be the greatest cruise I ever laid a course to."

"Guests?" murmured Fitzgerald, unconsciously poaching on Breitmann's thought.

"Yes. But they shall know nothing till we land in Corsica. And in a day or two this fellow would have laid hands on these things, and we'd never been any the wiser."

"And may we not expect more of him?" said Breitmann.

"Small good it will do him."

"Corsica," repeated the girl dreamily.

"Ay, Napoleon, the 'Corsican Brothers,' daggers and vendetta, the restless island! It is full of interest. I have been there." Breitmann smiled pleasantly at the girl, but his thought was unsmiling. Versed as he was in reading at a glance expression, whether it lay in the eyes, in the lips, or the hands, he realized with chagrin that he had made a misstep somewhere. For some reason he would have given much to know Fitzgerald was covertly watching him.

"You have been there, too, have you not, Mr. Fitzgerald?" asked Laura.

"Oh, yes; but never north of Ajaccio."

"Laura, what a finishing touch this will give to my book." For the admiral was compiling a volume on treasures found, lost, and still being hunted. "All I can say is, that I am really sorry that the money wasn't used for the purpose intended."

"I do not agree there," said Fitzgerald.

"And why not?" asked Breitmann.

"France is better off as she is. She has had all the empires and monarchies she cares for. Wonderful country! See how she has lived on in spite of them all. There will never be another kingdom in France, at least not in our generation. There's a Napoleon in Belgium and a Bourbon in England; the one drills mediocre soldiers and the other shoots grouse. They will never go any farther."

The secretary spread his fingers, and shrugged. "If there was only a direct descendant of Napoleon!"

"Well, there isn't," retorted Fitzgerald, dismissing the subject to limbo. "And much good it would do if there was."

"This treasure would rightly be his," insisted Breitmann.

"It was put together to bring Napoleon back. There is no Napoleon to bring back."

"In other words, the money belongs to the finder?"

"Exactly."

"Findings is keepings," the admiral determined. "That's Captain Flanagan's rule."

The girl could bring together no reasons for her mind inclining to the thought that between the two young men there had risen an antagonism of some sort, nothing serious, but still armed with spikes of light in the eyes and a semi-truculent angle to the chin. Fitzgerald was also aware of this opposition, and it annoyed him. Still, sometimes instinct guides more surely than logic. After all, he and Breitmann were only casual acquaintances. There had never been any real basis for friendship, and the possibility of this had been rendered nil by the telegram. One cannot make a friend of a man who has lied gratuitously.

"Now, Mr. Breitmann," interposed the admiral pacifically, for he was too keen a sailor not to have noted the chill in the air, "suppose we send off those letters? Here, I'll write the names and addresses, and you can finish them up by yourself. Also call up Captain Flanagan at Swan's Hotel and tell him to report this afternoon." The

admiral scribbled out the names of his guests, gathered up the precious documents, and put them into his pocket. "Come along now, my children; we'll take the air in the garden and picture the Frenchman's brig rocking in the harbor."

"It is all very good of you," said Fitzgerald, as the trio eyed the yacht from the terrace.

"Nonsense! The thing remains that all these years you ignored us."

"I have been, and still am, confoundedly poor. There is a little; I suppose I could get along in a hut in some country village; but the wandering life has spoiled me for that."

"False pride," rebuked the girl.

"I suppose it is."

"Your father had none. Long after the smash he'd hunt me up for a week's fishing. Isn't she a beauty?" pointing to the yacht.

"She is," the young man agreed, with his admiration leveled at the lovely profile of the girl.

"Let me see," began the admiral; "there will be Mr. and Mrs. Coldfield, first-class sailors, both of them. What's the name of that singer who is with them?"

"Hildegard von Mitter."

"Of the Royal Opera in Munich?" asked Fitzgerald.

"Yes. Have you met her? Isn't she lovely?"

"I have only heard of her."

"And Arthur Cathewe," concluded the admiral.

"Cathewe? That will be fine," Fitzgerald agreed aloud. But in his heart he was aware that he would never forgive Arthur for this trick. And he knew all the time! "He's the best friend I have. A great hunter, with a reputation which reaches from the Carpathians to the Himalayas, from Abyssinia to the Congo."

"He is charming and amusing. Only, he is very shy."

At four that afternoon Captain Flanagan presented his respects. The admiral was fond of the old fellow, a friendship formed in the blur of battle smoke. He had often been criticised

for officering his yacht with such a gruff, rather illiterate man, when gentlemen were to be had for the asking. But Flanagan was a splendid seaman, and the admiral would not have exchanged him for the smartest English naval reserve afloat. There was never a bend in Flanagan's back; royalty and commonalty were all the same to him. And those who came to criticise generally remained to admire; for Flanagan was the kind of sailor fast disappearing from the waters, a man who had learned his seamanship before the mast.

"Captain, how long will it take us to reach Fungal in the Madeiras?"

"Well, commodore, give us a decent sea an' we can make 'er in fourteen days. But I thought we wus goin' t' th' Banks, sir?"

"Changed my plans. We'll put out in twelve days. Everything shipshape?"

"Up to her buntin', sir, an' down to her keel. I sh'd say about six hundred tons; an' mebbe twelve days instead of fourteen. An' what'll be our course after Madeery, sir?"

"Ajaccio, Corsica."

"Yessir."

If the admiral had said the Antarctic, Flanagan would never have batted an eye.

"You have spoken the crew?"

"Yessir; deep-sea men, too, sir. Hol-loran'll have th' ingins as us'l, sir. Shall I run 'er up t' N' York fer provisions? I got your list."

"Triple the order. I'll take care of the wine and tobacco."

"All right, sir."

"That will be all. Have a cigar."

"Thank you, sir. What's th' trouble?" extending a pudgy hand toward the chimney.

"I'll tell you all about that later. Send up that man Donovan again." And it occurred to the admiral that it would not be a bad plan to cover Mr. Donovan's palm. They had forgotten all about him. He had overheard.

Very carefully the captain put away the cigar and journeyed back to the village. He regretted Corsica. He hated dagos, and Corsica was dago; thieves and cutthroats, all of them.

This long time Breitmann had dispatched his letters and gone to his room, where he remained till dinner. He was a servant in the house; he must not forget that. He had been worse things than this, and still he had not forgotten. He had felt the blush of shame. Yet he had remembered. And white anger had embossed the dull scars; it was impossible that he should forget.

He had grown accustomed, even in this short time, to the window overlooking the sea, and he leaned that late afternoon with his arms resting on the part where the two frames joined and locked. The sea was blue and gentle-breasted. Flocks of gulls circled the little harbor, and land birds ventured darily forth.

With what infinite care and patience had he gained this place! What struggles had ensued! Like one of yonder birds he had been blown about, but ever with his eyes hunting for this resting. He had found it and almost lost it. A day or so later! He had come to rob, to lie, to pillage, any method to gain his end; and fate had led him over this threshold without dishonor, ironically. Even for that, thank God!

Dimly he heard Fitzgerald whistling in his room across. The sound entered his ear, but not his trend of thought. God in heaven, what a small place this earth was! In his hand, tightly clutched, was a ball of paper, damp from the sweat of his palm. He had gnawed it, he had pressed it in despair. Cathewe was a man, and he was not afraid of any man living. Besides, men rarely became tellers of tales. But the woman; Hildegard von Mitter! How to meet her, how to look into her great eyes, how to hear the soul in her voice!

He flung the ball of paper into the corner. She could break him as one breaks a dry and brittle reed.

CHAPTER XII.

"Yessir, Mr. Donovan," said Captain Flanagan, his peg leg crossed and one hand abstractedly polishing the brass ferrule; "yessir, th' question is, what did y' hear?"

Mr. Donovan caressed his beer glass and reflected. The two were seated in the office of Swan's Hotel. "Well, I took them bricks out, an' it seems that loony ol' Frenchman our grandpas use to blow about had hid a box in th' chimbley."

"A box in th' chimbley. An' what wus in th' box?"

Mr. Donovan considered again. "I'll tell you th' truth, capt'n. It was a lot o' rigarmarole about a treasure. I wanted t' laugh. Your commodore's a hoodoo on pirates an' treasures, an' he ain't found either yet."

"No jokin'; keep a clear course."

"No harm. Th' admiral's all right, an' don't you forget it. As I wus sayin' they finds this 'ere box. Th' documents wus in French, but th' daughter read 'em off sumpin' wonderful. You've heard o' Napoleon?"

"Yes; I recollects th' name," replied the captain, with quiet ridicule.

"Well, this business 'pertained t' him. Seems some o' his friends got money t'gether t' rescue him from some island or other."

"St. Helena."

"That wus it. They left th' cash in a box in Corsiker, 'nother island; I-taly-an, I take it. But I'll bet a dollar you never find anythin' there."

"That is as may be." The captain liberated a full sigh and dug a hand into a trouser pocket. He looked cautiously about. The two of them were without witnesses. The landlord was always willing to serve beer to those in quest of it; but immediately on providing it, he resumed his interrupted perusal of the sporting column. At this moment his soul was flying round the track at Bennington. When the captain pulled out his hand it seemed full of bright autumn leaves. Donovan's glass was suspended midway between the table and his lips. Slowly the glass retraced the half circle and resumed its perpendicular position upon the oak. "Beauties; huh?" said the captain.

"Twenty-dollar bills!"

"Yessir; every one o' 'em as good as gold; payable t' bearer on demand, says your Uncle Sam."

"An' why are you makin' me envious this way?" said Donovan crossly.

"Donovan, you an' me's ben friends off an' on these ten years, ever since th' commodore bought the *Laura*. Well, says he t' me: 'Capt'n, we forgot that Mr. Donovan was in th' room at th' time o' th' discovery. Will you be so kind as t' impress him with th' fact that this expedition is on th' Q. T.? Not that I think he will say anythin', but you might add these few bits o' paper to his promise not t' speak.' Says I: 'I'll trust Mr. Donovan.' An' I do. You never broke no promise yet."

"It pays in th' long run," replied Mr. Donovan, vainly endeavoring to count the bills.

"Well, this 'ere little fortune is yours if you promise t' abide by th' conditions."

"That I keeps my mouth shut?"

"An' not open it even t' the missis."

Mr. Donovan permitted a doubt to wrinkle his brow. "That'll be a tough proposition."

"Put th' money in th' bank an' say nothin' till you hear from me," advised the captain.

"That's a go."

"Then I gives you these five nice ones with th' regards o' th' commodore." The captain stripped each bill and slowly laid it down on the table for the fear that by some curious circumstance there might be six.

"One hundred? Capt'n, I'm a grave." Mr. Donovan emptied his glass with a few swift gulps and banged the table. "Two more."

The landlord lowered his paper wearily—would they never let him alone?—and stepped behind the bar. At the same time Mr. Donovan folded the bills and stowed them away.

"Not even t' th' missis," he swore. "Here's luck, capt'n."

"Same t' you; an' don't get drunk this side o' Jersey City."

And with this admonition the captain drank his beer and thumped off for the water front, satisfied that the village would hear nothing from Mr. Donovan. Nevertheless, it was shame-

ful to let a hundred go that easy; twenty would have served. He was about to hail the skiff when he was accosted by the quiet little man he had recently observed sitting alone in the corner of Swan's office.

"Pardon, but you are Captain Flanagan of the yacht *Laura*?"

"Yessir," patiently. "But th' owner never lets anybody aboard he don't know, sir."

"I do not desire to come aboard, my captain. What I wish to know is if his excellency, the admiral, is at home."

"His excellency" rather confounded the captain for a moment; but he "came about without takin' more'n a bucketful," as he afterward expressed it to Holloran the engineer. "I knew right then he was a furriner; I know 'em. They ain't no excellencies in th' navy. But I tells him that th' commodore was snug in his berth up yonder; an' with that he bobs t' me like I was a lady. I've seen him in Swan's at night, readin'; allus chasin' butterflies when he sees 'em in th' street." And the captain rounded out this period by touching his forehead as a subtle hint that in his opinion the foreigner carried no ballast.

In the intervening time the subject and object of this light suggestion was climbing the hill with that tireless resilient step of one born to mountains. No task appeared visibly to weary this man. Small as he was, his bones were as strong and his muscles as stringy as a wolf's. If the butterfly was worth while he would follow till it fell to his net or daylight withdrew its support. Never he lost patience, never his smile faltered, never his mild spectacled eyes wavered. He was a savant by nature; he was a secret agent by choice. Who knows anything about rare butterflies appreciates the peril of the pursuit; one never picks the going and often stumbles. He was a hunter of butterflies by nature; but he possessed a something more than a mere smattering of other odd crafts. He was familiar with precious gems, marbles he knew, and cameos; he could point out

the weakness in a drawing, the false effort in a symphony; he had something of mutual interest to every man and woman he met.

So it fell out very well that Admiral Killigrew was fond of butterflies. Still, he should have been equally glad to know that the sailor's hobby inclined toward the exploits of pirates. Monsieur Ferrand was a modest man. That his exquisite brochure on lepidopterous insects was in nearly all the public libraries of the world only gratified, but added nothing to, his vanity.

As it oftentimes happens to a man whose mind is occupied with other things, the admiral, who received Monsieur Ferrand in the library, saw nothing in the name to kindle his recollection. He bade the savant to be seated while he read the letter of introduction which had been written by the secretary of the navy.

MY DEAR KILLIGREW: This will introduce to you Monsieur Ferrand, of the butterfly fame. He has learned of the success of your efforts in the West Indies and South America, and is eager to see your collection. Do what you can for him. I know you will, for you certainly must have his book. I myself do not know a butterfly from a June bug, but it will be a pleasure to bring you two together.

Breitmann arranged his papers neatly and waited to be dismissed. He had seen Monsieur Ferrand at Swan's, but had formed no opinion regarding him; in fact, the growth of his interest had stopped at indifference. On his part, the new arrival never so much as gave the secretary a second glance. The first was sufficient. And while the admiral read on, Monsieur Ferrand examined the broken skin on his palms.

"Mr. Ferrand! Well, well; this is a great honor, I'm sure. It was very kind of them to send you here. Where is your luggage?"

"I am staying at Swan's Hotel."

"We shall have your things up this very night."

"Oh!" said Monsieur Ferrand, in protest; though this was the very thing he desired.

"Not a word!" The admiral summoned the butler, who was the general

factotum at the Pines, and gave a dozen orders.

"Ah, you Americans!" laughed Monsieur Ferrand, pyramiding his fingers. "You leave us breathless."

"Your book has delighted me. But I am afraid my collection will not pay you for your trouble."

"That is for me to decide. My South American specimens are all seconds. On the other hand, you have netted yours yourself."

And straightway a bond of friendship was riven between these two men which still remains bright and untarnished by either absence or forgetfulness. They bent over the cases, agreed and disagreed, the one with sharp gestures, the other with the rise and fall of the voice. For them nothing else existed; they were truly engrossed.

Breitmann, hiding a smile which was partly a yawn, stole quietly away. Butterflies did not excite his concern in the least.

Monsieur Ferrand was charmed. He was voluble. Never had he entered a more homelike place, large enough to be called a château, yet as cheerful as a winter's fire. And the daughter! Her French was the elegant speech of Tours, her German Hanoverian. Incomparable! And she was not married? *Hélas!* How many luckless fellows walked the world desolate! And this was Monsieur Fitzgerald, the journalist? And Monsieur Breitmann had also been one? How delighted he was to be here! All this flowed on with perfect naturalness; there wasn't a false note anywhere. At dinner he diffused a warmth and geniality which were infectious. Laura was pleased and amused; and she adored her father for these impulses which brought to the board, unexpectedly, such men as Monsieur Ferrand.

Monsieur Ferrand did not smoke, but he dissipated to the extent of drinking three small cups of coffee after dinner.

"You are right," he acknowledged. There had been a slight dispute relative to the methods of roasting the berry. "Europe does not roast its coffee, it

burns it. The aroma, the bouquet! I am beaten."

"So am I," Fitzgerald reflected sadly, snatching a vision of the girl's animated face.

Three days he had ridden into the country with her, or played tennis, or driven down to the village and inspected the yacht. He had been lonely so long and this beautiful girl was such a good comrade. One moment he blessed the prospective treasure hunt, another he execrated it. To be with this girl was to love her; and whither this pleasurable idleness would lead him he was neither blind nor self-deceiving. But with that semi-humorous recklessness which was the leaven of his success, he thrust prudence behind him and stuck to the primrose path. He had played with fire before, but never had the coals burned so brightly. He did not say that she was above him; mentally and by birth they were equals; simply, he was compelled to admit of the truth that she was beyond him. Money. That was the obstacle. For what man will live on his wife's bounty? Supposing they found the treasure—and with his old journalistic suspicion he was still skeptical—and divided it, why, the interest on his share would not pay for her dresses. To the ordinary male eyes her gowns looked expensive, but to him who had picked up odd bits of information not usually in the pathway of man, to him there was no secret about it! That bodice and those sleeves of old Venetian point would have eaten up the gains of any three of his most prosperous months.

And Breitmann, dropping occasionally the ash of his cigarette on the tray, he, too, was pondering. But his German strain did not make it so easy for him as for Fitzgerald to give concrete form to this thought. The star, as he saw it, had nebulous appearance.

Monsieur Ferrand chatted gayly. Usually a man who holds his audience is of single purpose. The little Frenchman had two aims; one, to keep the conversation on subjects of his own selection; and to study without being observed. Among one of his own tales—

butterflies—he told of a chase he once had made in the Mountains of the Moon, in Abyssinia. To illustrate it he took up one of the nets standing in the corner. In his excitable way he was a very good actor. And when he swooped down the net to demonstrate the end of the story, the mesh caught on a button belonging to Breitmann's coat.

"Pardon!" said Monsieur Ferrand, with a blithe laugh. "The butterfly I was describing was not so big."

Breitmann freed himself amid general laughter. And with Laura's rising the little after-dinner party became disorganized.

It was yet early; but perhaps she had some thought she wished to be alone with. This consideration was the veriest bud in growth; still, it was such that she desired the seclusion of her room. She swung across her shoulders the sleepy Angora and wished the men good night.

The wire bell in the hall clock vibrated twice; two o'clock of the morning. A streak of moonshine fell aslant the floor and broke off abruptly. Before the safe in the library stood Breitmann, a small taper in his hand. For several minutes he contemplated sombrely the nickel combination wheel. He *could* open it, for he knew the combination. To open it would be the work of a moment. Why, then, did he hesitate? Why not pluck it forth and disappear on the morrow? The admiral had not made a copy, and without the key he might dig up Corsica till the crack of doom. The flame on the taper crept down. The man gave a quick movement to his shoulders; it was the shrug, not of impatience but of resignation. He saw the lock through the haze of a conjured face. He shut his eyes, but the vision remained. Slowly he drew his fingers over the flame.

Yet, before the flame died wholly it touched two points of light in the doorway, the round crystals of a pair of spectacles.

"Two souls with but a single thought!" the secret agent murmured.

"Poor devil! Why does he hesitate? Why does he not take it and be gone? Is he still honest? *Peste!* I must be growing old. I shall not ruin him, I shall save him. It is not good politics, but it is good Christianity. *Schlafen Sie wohl, Hochwohlgeboren!*"

CHAPTER XIII.

"Don't you sometimes grow weary for an abiding place?" Laura pulled off her gauntlets and laid her hot hands on the cool, lichen-grown stones of the field wall. The bridle rein hung over her arm. Fitzgerald had drawn a stirrup through his. "Think of wandering here and there; with never a place to come back to."

"I have thought of it often in the few days I have been here. I have a home in New York, but I could not possibly afford to live in it; so I rent it; and when I want to go fishing there's enough under hand to pay the expenses. My poor old dad! He was always indorsing notes for his friends, or carrying stock for them; and nothing ever came back. I'm afraid the disillusion broke his heart. And then, perhaps, I was a bitter disappointment. I was expelled from college in my junior year. I had no head for figures other than that kind which inhabit the Louvre and the Vatican.

Her face became momentarily mirthful.

"So I couldn't take hold of the firm for him," he continued. "And I suppose the last straw was when I tried my hand at reporting on one of the newspapers. He knew that the gathering of riches, so far as I was concerned, was a closed door. But I found my level; the business was and is the only one that ever interested me or fused my energy with real work."

"But it is real work. You are one of those men who have done something. Most men these days rest on their father's hands."

"It's the line of the least resistance. I never knew that the Jersey coast was so picturesque. What a sweep! Do you know, your house on that pine-

grown crest reminds me of the Villa Serbelloni, only yonder is the sea instead of Como?"

"Como." Her eyes became dreamily half shut. Recollection put on its seven-league boots and annihilated the space between the wall under her elbows and the gardens of Serbelloni. Fitzgerald half understood her thought. "Isn't Mr. Breitmann just a bit of a mystery to you?" she asked. The seven-league boots had returned at a bound.

"In some ways, yes." He rather resented the abrupt angle; it was not in poetic touch with the time being.

"He is inclined to be too much reserved. But last night Monsieur Ferrand succeeded in tearing down some of it. If I could put in a book what all you men have seen and taken part in! Mr. Breitmann would be almost handsome but for those scars."

He kicked the turf at the foot of the wall. "In Germany they are considered beauty spots."

"I am not in sympathy with that custom."

"Still, it requires courage of a kind."

"The noblest wounds are those that are carried unseen. Student scars are merely patches of vanity."

"He has others beside those. He was nearly killed in the Soudan."

Fitzgerald was compelled to offer some defense for the absent. That Breitmann had lied to him, that his appearance here had not been in the regular order of things, did not take away the fact that the Bavarian was a man and a brave one. Closely as he had watched, up to the present he had learned absolutely nothing; and to have shown Breitmann the telegram would have accomplished nothing farther than to have put him wholly on guard.

"Have you no scars?" mischief in her eyes.

"Not yet," and the force of his gaze turned hers aside. "Yet, I must not forget my conscience; 'tis pretty well battered up."

She greeted this with laughter. She had heard men talk like this before. "You have probably never done a mean or petty thing in all your life."

"Mean and petty things never disturb a man's conscience. It's the big things that scar."

"That's a platitude."

"Then my end of the conversation is becoming flat."

"Confess, that you are eager to return to the great highways once more."

"I shall confess nothing of the sort. I should like to stay here for a hundred years."

"You would miss us all very much then," merrily. "And Napoleon's treasure would have gone in and out of innumerable pockets."

"Do you really and truly believe that we shall bring home a single franc of it?" facing her with incredulous eyes.

"Really and truly. And why not? Treasures have been found before. Fie on you for a Doubting Thomas!"

"We sometimes go many miles to find, in the end, that the treasure was all the time under our very eyes."

"Hyperbole!" But she looked down at the lichen again and began peeling it off the stone. She thought of a duke she knew. At this instant he would have been telling her that she was the most beautiful woman since Helen. What a relief this man at her side was! She was perfectly aware that he admired her, but he veiled his tributes with half smiles and flashes of humor. "What a gay little man that Monsieur Ferrand is!"

"Lively as a cricket. Your father, I understand, is to take him as far as Marseilles. After to-night everything will be quite formal, I suppose. Honestly, I feel ill at ease in accepting your splendid hospitality. I'm an interloper. I haven't even the claim of an ordinary introduction. It has been very, very kind of you."

"You know Mrs. Coldfield. I will, if you wish it, ask her to present you to me."

"I am really serious."

"So am I."

"They will be here to-morrow?"

"Yes. And in four days we sail. Oh, it is all so beautiful! A real treasure hunt."

"It does not seem possible that I

have been here a week. It has been a long time since I enjoyed myself so thoroughly. Have you ever wondered what has become of the other man?"

"The other man?"

"Yes; the one in or outside the chimney. I've been thinking about him this long while. Hasn't it occurred to you that he may have other devices?"

"If he has he will find that he has waited too long. But I would like to know how he found out. You see," triumphantly, "he believed that there is one." She shook the rein, for the sleek mare was nozzling her shoulder and pawing slightly. "Let us be off."

She put her small booted foot on his palm and vaulted into the saddle, and he swung on to his own mount. He stuffed his cap into a pocket, for he was no fair-weather horseman, but loved the tingle of the wind rushing through his hair; and the two cantered down the clear sandy road.

"*En avant!*" she cried joyously, with a light stroke of her whip.

For half a mile they ran, and drew in at the fork in the road. Exhilaration was in the eyes of both of them.

"There's nothing equal to it. You feel alive. And off there," with a wave of her whip toward the sea, "off there lies our fortune. O happy day! To take part in a really, truly adventure, without the assistance of a romancer!"

"I think you are one of the most charming women I have ever met," he replied.

"Some women would object to the modification, but I rather like it."

"I withdraw the modification." The smile on his lips was not reflected in his eyes.

The antithesis of the one expression to the other did not annoy her; rather she was sensitive to a tender exultance, the recurrence of which, later in the day, subdued her; for Breitmann at tea turned a few phrases of a similar character. Fitzgerald was light-hearted and boyish. Breitmann was grave and dignified, but in the eyes of each there was a force which she had encountered so seldom as to forget its being. Breitmann, in his capacity of secretary, was

not so often in her company as Fitzgerald; nevertheless, she was subtly attracted toward him. When he was of the mind he could invent a happy compliment with a felicity no less facile than Fitzgerald. And the puzzling thing of it all was, both men she knew from their histories had never been ornaments at garden parties, where compliments are current coin. She liked Fitzgerald, but she admired Breitmann, a differentiation which she had no inclination to resolve into first principles. That Breitmann was a secretary for hire drew no barrier in her mind. She had known many gentlemen of fine families who had served in like situations. There were no social distinctions. On the other hand, she never felt wholly comfortable with Breitmann. There was not the least mistrust in this feeling. It was rather because she instinctively felt that he was above his occupation. To sum it up briefly, Breitmann was difficult to understand and Fitzgerald wasn't.

Fitzgerald had an idea; boldly put, it was a grave suspicion. Not once had he forgotten the man in the chimney. Once the finger had pointed at Breitmann or some one with whom he was in understanding. This had proved to be groundless. But he kept turning over the incident and inspecting it from all sides. There were others a-treasure hunting; persons unknown; and a man might easily become desperate in the pursuit of two million francs, almost half a million of American money; more; for some of those coins would be rare. He had thoroughly searched the ground outside the cellar window, but the sea gravel held its secret with a tenacity as baffling as the mother sea herself. There was a new under-groom, or, rather, there had been. He had left, and where he had gone no one knew. Fitzgerald dismissed him; at the most he could have been but an accomplice, one to unlock the cellar window.

So, while Breitmann lingered near Laura, offering what signs of admiration he dared, while the admiral chatted to his country neighbors who were gathered round the tea table, Fitzger-

ald and Monsieur Ferrand were braced against the terrace wall, a few yards farther on, and exchanged views on various peoples.

"America is a wonderful country," said Monsieur Ferrand, when they had exhausted half a dozen topics. He spread out his hands, Frenchman-wise.

"So it is," Fitzgerald threw away his cigarette.

"And how foolish England was over a pound of tea."

"Something like that."

"But see what she lost!" with a second gesture.

"In one way it would not have mattered. She would patronize us as she still does."

"Do you not resent it, this patronizing attitude?"

"Oh, no. We are very proud to be patronized by England," cynically. "It's a fine thing to have a lord tell you that you wear your clothes jolly well."

"I wonder if you are serious or jesting?"

"I am very serious at this moment," said Fitzgerald quietly, catching the other by the wrist and turning the palm.

Monsieur Ferrand looked into his face with an astonishment on his own most genuine. But he did not struggle. "Why do you do that?"

"I am curious, Monsieur Ferrand, when I see a hand like this. Would you mind letting me see the other?"

"Not in the least." Monsieur Ferrand offered the other hand.

Fitzgerald let go. "What was your object?"

"*Mon Dieu!* What object?"

Fitzgerald lowered his voice. "What was your object in digging holes in yonder chimney? Did you know what was there? And what do you propose to do now?"

Monsieur Ferrand coolly took off his spectacles and polished the lenses. It needed but a moment to adjust them. "What are you talking about?"

"You are really Monsieur Ferrand?" countered the young man coldly.

The Frenchman produced a wallet and took out a letter. It was written

by the President of France, introducing Monsieur Ferrand to the ambassador at Washington. Next, there was a passport, and far more important than either of these was the Legion of Honor. "Yes, I am Anatole Ferrand."

"That is all I desire to know."

"Shall we return to the ladies?" asked Monsieur Ferrand, restoring his treasures.

"Since there is nothing more to be said at present. It seems strange to me that foreign politics should find its way here."

"Politics? I am only a butterfly hunter."

"There are varieties. But you are the man. I shall find out."

"Possibly," returned Monsieur Ferrand, thinking hard.

"I give you fair warning that if anything is missing——"

"Oh, Mr. Fitzgerald!"

"I shall know where to look for it," with a smile which had no humor in it.

"Why not denounce me now?"

"Would it serve your purpose?"

"No," with deeper gravity. "It would be a great disaster; how great I cannot tell you."

"Then, I shall say nothing."

"About what?" dryly, even whimsically.

"About your being a secret agent from France."

This time Monsieur Ferrand's glance proved that he was truly startled. Only three times in his career had his second life been questioned or suspected. He eyed his hands accusingly; they had betrayed him. This young man was clever, cleverer than he had thought. He had been too confident and had committed a blunder. Should he trust him? With that swift unerring instinct which makes the perfect student of character, he said: "You will do me a great favor not to impart this suspicion to any one else."

"Suspicion?"

"It is true; I am a secret agent." He said it proudly.

"You wish harm to none here?"

"*Mon Dieu!* No. I am here for the very purpose of saving you all from

heartaches, and misfortune, and disillusion. And had I set to work earlier I should have accomplished all this without a single one of you knowing it. Now the matter will have to go on to its end."

"Can you tell me anything?"

"Not now. I trust you; will you trust me?"

Fitzgerald hesitated for a space.

"Yes."

"For that, thanks," Monsieur Ferrand put out a hand. "It is clean, Mr. Fitzgerald, for all that the skin is broken."

"Of that I have no doubt."

"Before we reach Corsica you will know."

And so temporarily that ended the matter. But as Fitzgerald went over to the chair just vacated by the secretary, he found that there was a double zest to life now. This would be far more exciting than dodging ice floes and freezing one's toes.

Laura told him the news. Their guests would arrive that evening in time for dinner.

It was Breitmann's habit to come down first. He would thrum a little on the piano or take down some old volume. To-night it was Heine. He had not met any of the guests yet, which he considered a piece of good fortune. But God only knew what would happen when *she* saw him! He dreaded the moment, dreaded it with anguish. She was a woman, schooled in acting, but a time comes when the best acting is not sufficient. If only in some way he might have warned her; but no way had opened. She would find him ready, however, ready with his eyes, his lips, his nerves. What would the others think or say if she lost her presence of mind? His teeth snapped. He read on. The lamp threw the light on the scarred side of his face.

He heard some one enter, and his gaze stole over the top of his book. This person was a woman, and her eyes traveled from object to object with a curiosity tinged with that incertitude which attacks us all when we enter an

unfamiliar room. She was dressed in black, showing the white arms and neck. Her hair was like ripe wheat after a rainstorm; ah, but he knew well the color of her eyes, blue as the Adriatic. She was a woman of perhaps thirty, matured, graceful, handsome. The sight of her excited a thrill in his veins, deny it how he would.

She scanned the long row of books, the strange weapons, the heroic and sinister flags, the cases of butterflies. With each inspection she stepped nearer and nearer, till by reaching out his hand he might have touched her. Quietly he rose. It was a critical moment.

She was startled round. She had thought she was alone.

"Pardon me," she said, in a low musical voice. "I did not know that any one was here." And then she saw his face. Her own blanched and her hands went to her heart. "Karl!"

CHAPTER XIV.

She swayed a little, but recovered as the pain of the shock was succeeded by numbness. That out of the dark of this room, into the light of that lamp, in this house so far removed from cities that it seemed not a part of the world, there should step this man! Why had there been no hint of his presence? Why had not the clairvoyance of despair warned her? One of her hands rose and passed over her eyes, as if to sponge out this phantom. It was useless; it was no dream; he was still there, this man she had neither seen nor heard of for five years because her will was stronger than her desire. This man who had broken her heart as children break toys. And deep below all this present terror was the abiding truth that she still loved him and always would love him. The shame of this knowledge did more than all else to rouse and to nerve her.

"Karl?" It was like an echo.

"Yes." There was war in his voice and attitude, and not without reason. He had wronged this woman, not with direct intention it was true, but nevertheless, he had wronged her; and her

presence here could mean nothing less than that fate had selected this spot for the reckoning. She could topple down his carefully reared schemes with the same ease with which he had blown over hers. And to him these schemes were life to his breath and salt to his blood, everything. What was one woman? cynically. "Yes, it is I," in the tongue native to them both.

"And what do you here?"

"I am Admiral Killigrew's private secretary." He wet his lips. He was not so strong before this woman as he had expected to be. The glamour of the old days was faintly rekindled at the sight of her. And she was beautiful.

"Then, this is the house?" in a whisper.

"It is."

"You terrify me!"

"Hildegarde, this is your scene," shrugging. "Tell them all you know; break me, ruin me. Here is a fine opportunity for revenge."

"God forbid!" she cried, with a shiver. "Were you guilty of all crimes, I could only remember that once I loved you."

"You shame me," he replied frankly, but with infinite relief. "You have outdone me in magnanimity. Will you forgive me?"

"Oh, yes. Forgiveness is one of the few things you men cannot rob us of." She spoke without bitterness, but her eyes were dim and her lips drooped. "What shall we do? They must not know that we have met."

"Cathewe knows," moodily.

"I had forgotten."

"I leave all in your hands. Do what you will. If you break me—and God knows that you can do it—it would be only an act of justice. I have been a damned scoundrel; I am man enough to admit of that."

She saw his face more clearly now. Time had marked it. There were new lines at the corners of his eyes and the cheek bones were more prominent. Perhaps he had suffered, too. "You will always have the courage to do," she

said, "right or wrong in a great manner."

"Am I wrong to seek——"

"Hush! I know. It is what you must thrust aside or break to reach it, Karl. The thing itself is not wrong, but you will go about it wrongly. You cannot help that."

He did not reply. Perhaps she was right. Indeed, was she not herself an example of it? If there was one thing in his complex career that he regretted more than another it was the deception of this woman. He did not possess the usual vanity of the sexes; there was nothing here to be proud of; his dream of conquest was not over the kingdom of women.

"Some one is coming," he said, listening.

"Leave it all to me."

"Ah!" with a hand toward her.

"Do not say it. I understand the thought. If only you loved me, you would say it!" the iron in her voice unmistakable.

He let his hand fall. He was sorry.

Presently the others made their entrance upon the scene, a singular anticlimax. The admiral rang for the cock-tails. Introductions followed.

"Is it not strange?" said the singer to Laura. "I stole in here to look at the trophies, when I discovered Mr. Breitmann whom I once knew in Munich."

"Mr. Cathewe," said the young hostess, "this is Mr. Breitmann, who is aiding father in the compilation of his book."

"Mr. Breitmann and I have met before," said Cathewe soberly.

The two men bowed. Cathewe never gave his hand to any but his intimates. But Laura, who was not aware of this ancient reserve, thought that both of them showed a lack of warmth. And Fitzgerald, who was watching all corners now, was sure that the past of his friend and Breitmann interlaced in some way.

"So, young man," said Mrs. Coldfield, a handsome, motherly woman, "you have had the impudence to let

five years pass without darkening my doors. What excuse have you?"

"I am guilty of anything you say," Fitzgerald answered humbly. "What shall be my punishment?"

"You shall take Miss Laura in and I shall sit at your left."

"For my sins it shall be as you say. But, really, I have been so little in New York," he added.

"I forgive you simply because you have not made a failure of your mother's son. And you look like her, too." It is one of the privileges of old persons to compare the young with this or that parent.

"You are flattering me. Dad used to say that I was as homely as a hedge fence."

"Now you're fishing, and I'm too old a fish to rise to such a cast."

"I heard you sing in Paris a few years ago," said Monsieur Ferrand.

"Yes?" Hildegard von Mitter wondered who this little man could be.

"And you sing no more?"

"No. The bird has flown; only the woman remains." They were at the table now, and she absently plucked at the flowers beside her plate.

"Ah, to sing like you did, and then to disappear, to vanish! You had no right to do so. You belonged to the public," animatedly.

"The public is always selfish; it always demands more than any single person can give to it. Pardon," she said as Cathewe leaned to speak to her.

"I did not hear."

Monsieur Ferrand nibbled his crisp celery.

"I asked, what will you do?" repeated Cathewe for her ear alone.

"What do you mean?"

"Did you know that he was here?"

"I should not have been seated at this table, had I known."

"Some day you are going to tell me all about it." He added: "And smile when you answer me."

"Thank you. I forgot. My dear friend, I am never going to tell you all about it. Why did you not come first?" her voice vibrating.

"You still love him?"

"That is not kind," striving hard to keep the smile on her trembling lips. "Oh, I beg of you, do not make this friendship impossible. Do not rob me of the one man I trust."

Cathewe motioned aside the fish and reached for his Sauterne. "I have loved you faithfully and loyally for seven years. I tried to win you by all those roads a man may honorably traverse in quest of the one woman. For seven years; and for something like three I have stayed away at your command. Will you believe it? Sometimes my hands ache for his throat. Smile, they are looking."

It was a crooked smile. "Why did I ever tell you?"

"Why did you ever tell me—only part? It is the other part I wish to know. Till I learn what that is I shall never leave you. You will find that there is a difference between love and infatuation."

"As I have never known infatuation I cannot tell the difference. Now, no more, unless you care to see me break down before them. For, if you tell me that you have loved me seven years, I have loved him eight," cruelly, for Cathewe was pressing her cruelly.

"Devil take him! What do you find in the man?"

"What do you find in me?" Her eyes filled with anger.

"Forgive me, Hildegard; I am blind and mad to-night. I did not expect to find him here either."

Breitmann had tried ineffectually to read their lips. She had given her word, and once given he knew of old that she never broke it; but he was keenly alive that in some way he was the topic of their inaudible conversation. As he sat here to-night he knew why he had never loved Hildegard, why, in fact, he had never loved any woman. The one great passion which comes in the span of life was centred in the girl beside him, dividing her moments between him and Fitzgerald. Strange, but he had not known it till he saw the two women together. For once his nice calculations had ceased to run smoothly; there appeared now a

knot in the thread for which he saw no untying.

"You do not sing now?" asked Laura across the table.

"No," Hildegard answered; "my voice is gone."

"Oh! I am so sorry."

"It does not matter. I can hum a little to myself; there is yet some pleasure in that. But in opera, no, never again. Has not Mrs. Coldfield told you? No? Imagine! One night in Dresden, in the middle of the aria, my voice broke miserably, and I could not go on."

"And her heart nearly broke with it," interposed Mrs. Coldfield, with the best intentions, nearer the truth than she knew. "I am sorry, Laura, that I never told you before."

Hildegard laughed. "Sooner or later this must happen. I worked too hard, perhaps. At any rate, the opera will know me no more."

There was the hard blue of flint in Cathewe's eyes as they met and held Breitmann's. There was a duel, and the latter was routed. But hate burned fiercely in his heart against the man who could compel him to lower his eyes. Some day he would pay back that glance.

Now, Monsieur Ferrand had missed nothing. He twisted the talk into other channels with his usual adroitness, but all the while there was bubbling in his mind the news that these two men had met before. The history of Hildegard von Mitter was known to him. But how much did she know, or this man Cathewe? The woman was a thoroughbred. He, Anatole Ferrand, knew; it was his business to know; and that she should happen upon the scene he considered as one of those rare good pieces of luck that fall to the lot of few. There would be something more than treasure hunting here; an intricate comedy-drama, with as many well-defined sides as a diamond. He ate his endives with pleasure and sipped the old, yellow Pol Roger with his eyes beaming toward the gods. To be, after a fashion, the prompter behind the scenes; to be able to read the final line

before the curtain! Butterflies and butterflies, and pins and pins.

Did Laura note any of these portentous glances, those exchanged between the singer and Cathewe and Breitmann? Perhaps. At all events she felt a curiosity to know how long Hildegarde von Mitter had known her father's secretary. There was no envy in her heart as again she acknowledged the beauty of the other woman; moreover, she liked her and was going to like her more. Impressions were made upon her almost instantly, for good or bad, and rarely changed.

She turned oftenest to Fitzgerald, for he made particular effort to entertain, and he succeeded better than he dreamed. It kept turning over and over in her mind what a whimsical, capricious whirligig was at work. It was droll, this man at her side, chatting to her as if he had known her for years, when, seven or eight days ago, he had stood, a man all unknown to her, on a city corner, selling plaster of Paris statuettes on a wager; and but for Mrs. Coldfield, she had passed him forever. Out upon the prude who would look askance at her for harmless daring!

"Drop into my room before you turn in," urged Fitzgerald of Cathewe.

"That I shall, my boy. I've some questions to ask of you."

But a singular idea came into creation, and this was for him, Cathewe, to pay Breitmann a visit on the way to Fitzgerald's room. Not one man in a thousand would have dared put this idea into a plan of action. But neither externals nor conventions ever deterred Cathewe when he sought a thing. He rapped lightly on the door of the secretary's room.

"Come in."

Cathewe did so, gently closing the door behind him. Breitmann was in his shirt sleeves. He rose from his chair and laid down his cigarette. A faint smile broke the thin line of his mouth. He waited for his guest, or, rather this intruder, to break the silence. And as Cathewe did not speak at once, there was a tableau during which each was busy with the eyes.

"The vicissitudes of time," said Cathewe, "have left no distinguishable marks upon you."

Breitmann bowed. He remained standing.

And Cathewe had no wish to sit. "I never expected to see you in this house."

"A compliment which I readily return."

"A private secretary; I never thought of you in that capacity."

"One must take what one can," tranquilly.

"A good precept." Cathewe rolled the ends of his mustache, a trifle perplexed how to put it. "But there should be exceptions. What," and his voice became crisp and cold, "what was Hildegarde von Mitter to you?"

"And what is that to you?"

"My question first."

"I choose not to answer it."

Again they eyed each other, like fencers.

"Were you married?"

Breitmann laughed. Here was his opportunity to wring this man's heart; for he knew that Cathewe loved the woman. "You seem to be in her confidence. Ask her."

"A poltroon would say as much. There is a phase in your make-up I have never fully understood. Physically you are a brave man, but morally you are a cad and a poltroon."

"Take care!" Breitmann stepped forward menacingly.

"There will be no fisticuffs," contemptuously.

"Not if you are careful. I have answered your question; you had better leave at once."

"She is loyal to you. It was not her voice that broke that night; it was her heart. You have some hold over her."

"None that she cannot throw off at any time." Breitmann's mind was working strangely.

"If she would have me," went on Cathewe, playing openly, "I would marry her to-morrow, priest or Protestant, for her religion would be mine."

There was a spark of admiration in Breitmann's eyes. This man Cathewe

was out of the ordinary. Well, as for that, so was he himself. He walked silently to the door and opened it, standing aside for the other to pass. "She is perfectly free. Marry her. She is all and more than you wish her to be. Will you go now?"

Cathewe bowed and turned on his heel. Breitmann had really gotten the best of him.

A peculiar interview, and only two strong men could have handled it in so few words. Not a word above normal tone; once or twice only, in the flutter of the eyelids or in the gesture of the hands, was there any sign that had these been primitive times the two would have gone joyously at one another's throat.

"I owed her that much," said Breitmann as he locked the door.

"It did not matter at all to me," was Cathewe's thought, as he knocked on Fitzgerald's door and heard the cheery call. "I only wanted to learn what sort of a man he is."

"Oh, I really don't know whether I like him or not," declared Fitzgerald. "I have run across him two or three times, but we were both busy. He has told me a little about himself. He's been knocked about a good deal. Has a title, but doesn't use it."

"A title? That is news to me. Probably it is true."

"I was surprised to learn that you knew him at all."

"Not very well. Met him in Munich mostly."

A long pause.

"Isn't Miss Killigrew just rippin'? There's a comrade for some man. Lucky devil, who gets her! She is new to me every day."

"I think I warned you."

"You were a nice one, never to say a word that you knew the admiral!"

"Are you complaining?"

Fitzgerald laughed; no, not exactly; he wasn't complaining.

"You remember the caravan trails in the Lybian desert; the old ones on the way to Khartoum? The pathway behind her is like that, marked with the bleached bones of princely and ducal and commoner hopes." Cathewe stretched out in his chair. "Since she was eighteen, Jack, she has crossed the man trail like a sand storm, and quite as innocently, too."

"Oh, rot! I'm no green and salad youth."

"Your bones will be only the tougher, that's all."

Another pause.

"But what's your opinion regarding Breitmann?"

Cathewe laced his fingers and bent his chin on them. "There's a great rascal or a great hero somewhere under his skin."

TO BE CONTINUED.

SONG

SAD hours—sad hours these be

Oh, fond and true,
With the long, lonely leagues
"Twixt me and you!

And yet—and yet I know,
Dear heart of grace,
Love's power can overcome
Both time and space!

By love—by love (ah, joy!)
The gulf is spanned;
Across the vasts of night
I touch your hand!

CLINTON SCOLLARD.

DICK · GETS · INTO THE · GAME



By GEORGE HYDE PRESTON



YOU take to spending money as naturally as a puppy takes to milk," remarked Richard Hurling, Senior, testily, looking over the top of his evening paper at Richard Hurling, Junior.

"It is an easy stunt to learn, dad," returned Richard Hurling, Junior, modestly.

"Now, see here, Dick," went on his father, putting down the paper, "I don't mind your spending the money. There is so much of it that it does not make any particular difference. But suppose that some morning there were not any more, then where would you be? What would you do? That is what I want to know. You have never earned a cent, or done a stroke of work in your life."

"I trained for the crew, in college," put in Dick hopefully.

"Yes, and didn't make it."

Dick laughed. "The coach kicked up such a row about a couple of cigarettes, that really, you see——"

"Dick," broke in Mr. Hurling, "I am serious about this. When I came to New York, thirty-five years ago, I had to earn my first breakfast before I ate it. I did it without any trouble. I knew how. But where would you come out?" he went on, a little contemptuously. "What would you do about a breakfast under those circumstances?"

"I would strike some of the fellows

for a loan, of course," returned Dick easily.

His father got up abruptly from his chair. "I suppose that it is my fault, and the fault of my money, that I have a useless idler for a son. Yes, a useless idler, sir!" he repeated, with a snap of his jaw.

Dick got up, too.

"How do you spend your time?" went on his father hotly, pointing to a big headline in the paper which lay on the table.

Dick glanced down, and read:

Wrecks Shop Window to Save Child!
Son of Richard Hurling, the millionaire broker, runs car through milliner's window in the Avenue to avoid hitting boy! Mrs. Merryfield and Miss Merryfield in car! No one hurt! Great presence of mind! Plucky act! Car badly damaged! Window wrecked!

Dick looked up. "Makes me out quite a hero, doesn't it?" he inquired blandly.

His father exploded. "Hero! Exceeding speed limit, of course. Ruined a six-thousand-dollar car and wrecked a milliner shop!"

"You wouldn't have had me run over the boy, would you, dad? He jumped right in front of the car. Dollie screamed. She thought that I showed great presence of mind."

"Dollie doesn't have to foot the bills," cut in Mr. Hurling.

Dick's eyes danced. "You ought to have seen the window, dad, when the car stopped inside it! There was a

Paris hat on each lamp, a wax lady wearing a Paquin gown was doubled up under the front wheel, and another lady with a false front—she owned the shop—was dancing around in the wreck, saying things in French! I shouldn't wonder if the bill did show up pretty big."

"Confound the bill, Dick! I am not worried about that. It is you that I am worrying about. I would give half I own to see you settled down to work and married to a good, sensible woman, who would be a help to you. And instead of that, you do nothing, and you will probably end by marrying some empty-headed, money-burning idiot, like Dollie Merryfield! I want my son to amount to something, to take up my business, and follow in my footsteps."

"No, thank you, dad. I am not walking in any bear tracks. If I go into Wall Street, it will be on the other side of the market."

"Go in, or stay out," exclaimed his father; "but, for Heaven's sake, do something! Even if it is only shoveling sand. The newsboy, calling papers, outside the window there, is of more consequence than you are. He is making a start for himself."

Dick's mouth was smiling, but there was a quick color in his cheeks. "I don't think that making money is much of a stunt," he drawled.

"Then why don't you try it?" snapped his father.

"I intend to—the same as you did."

His father stared.

"I will start to-morrow, early. I suppose that you started early. I will earn my breakfast before I eat it, and my luncheon, and my dinner, likewise. I will not spend a cent to-morrow that I do not make for myself—with my hands or my head."

"Without borrowing from any of the fellows?" put in his father.

"Yes, and when I come back to-morrow night——"

"When you come back to-morrow night," broke in Mr. Hurling, "I will give you fifty dollars for each one you

have made. There is a sporting chance for you!"

"Done!" said Dick. "Be careful I don't break you, dad," he added, with a little gleam in his eyes.

When Dick woke up the next morning it was still dark, and something that sounded to him like a cross between a trolley-car bell and a fire-engine gong was dinning in his ears. Dick was not used to alarm clocks set for five-thirty a. m.

He jumped out of bed, turned on the light, looked at the clock, and grinned.

"I've got as good a start as dad had, anyway. Might as well do it right."

In a moment, he was splashing in his tub. "I don't suppose starting clean is against the rules of the game," he murmured.

After he had dressed, he turned his pockets inside out. "Not a cent in my clothes!" he ejaculated. "Now for breakfast! Gee, I never was so hungry in my life!"

He went softly downstairs, let himself out the door, and stood for a moment on the steps, looking down the Avenue. The street lights glowed in long lines toward the Plaza, and the Park opposite looked like some dim, mysterious wilderness. "Nothing doing around here," murmured Dick. "I guess I will get over to Third Avenue." And he walked briskly down an echoing side street, shivering a little, for the air was sharp. There was just a gleam of day ahead of him.

"I knew that there would be things doing over here," he nodded, as he felt the jar of the elevated, and dodged the clamorous trolleys.

Lights showed mistily here and there from shop windows. People were hurrying along the sidewalks in the half dawn. The street was getting ready for the day's business.

Dick walked irresolutely on, and paused at last before a restaurant. He could see the long line of tables through the window, and waitresses moving about, arranging things.

"There is my breakfast, all right," he exclaimed hungrily. "But that little

formality of earning it must be arranged first," he added.

While he lingered, with "puckered brow, considering, a girl, trimly clad in gray, passed him and stood poised, in graceful hesitation, before the door of the restaurant for an uncertain moment. Then she opened it, and went in.

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Dick. "What a perfect stunner! A regular blessed vision! I did not know that angels breakfasted at this hour of the morning! And in Third Avenue, too!"

He started impulsively forward, and put his hand on the latch of the door. Then, suddenly, he drew back, and felt in his empty pockets. "Thunder! I can't go in! I haven't any money to pay for my breakfast!"

As he stood frowning at the door, it suddenly opened, and a tall, thin young fellow, with a sandy head and a high collar, was jerked violently into the street by a short, fat man, with an apoplectic face.

"I'll teach you to tap the till, right under my nose!" the latter yelled. "You ain't a head waiter. You are a thief! Get out!"

"What's the row?" asked Dick of the apoplectic one, as the high collar disappeared in the crowd.

"Knocking down!" returned the red-faced man briefly. "Drat the luck! Right at the beginning of a busy day, and I ain't got any head waiter."

Dick suddenly saw his way to breakfast—and to another glimpse of the girl!

"I am looking for a job," he put in.

"Are you a head waiter?" snapped the restaurant man, still puffing with wrath.

"I don't claim to be an expert," responded Dick mildly. "But I have seen a lot of it done," he added. "I thought I might help out at breakfast till you got a regular man."

"All right, I'll give you a try. Come in."

As they entered the restaurant, Dick's eye swept along the tables for the girl. She was not sitting at any of them.

"Do you see that waitress standing

behind the fifth table on the left?" said the proprietor. "She is a green hand. You will have to break her in. Name's Maggie."

Dick stared. There, behind the table indicated, with her gray dress covered by a long apron, stood the girl.

"A waitress!" ejaculated Dick, under his breath. "Name's Maggie! Gee-whiz!"

"Look alive, now," put in the proprietor, "there comes a bunch of customers."

Dick stepped forward with as near a professional air as he could summon up, and seated them as best he could; but he did not put any of them at the new girl's table.

The patrons of the place began to swarm in now, and Dick struggled manfully, if not altogether successfully, with his job.

"Right this way!" He beckoned to a pasty-faced individual, with a big watch chain festooned over an expansive flowered waistcoat.

The man shook his head, and helped himself to a chair at the new girl's table. "I guess this place will suit me, all right," he said, with a self-satisfied glance at her.

Dick's eyes met hers for a swift moment. His said: "I tried to keep him away." And hers answered: "I know that you did."

"Confound the brute!" muttered Dick. "If he annoys her, I will break his head."

Dick tried to keep his eyes on what was going on at the new girl's table. The man was evidently taking as long as possible over his breakfast, and the girl looked flushed and uncomfortable. Finally, as Dick was passing the table on one of his rounds, he saw the man reach out, and slyly pinch her arm with his fat fingers.

It all happened in a moment.

The girl shrank back, her face crimson, and her eyes flashing.

Dick jerked the man out of his chair, and had propelled him halfway to the door by a series of vigorous kicks, when the proprietor rushed between them. "What's the matter here?" he yelled.

People rose from their places, and crowded around.

"The hog called me a liar," responded Dick coolly.

"What if he did? He is one of my best customers. You're fired!"

"I know it," returned Dick grimly, "but before I go I intend to finish firing this thing." And again he fell upon the man, and kicked him, an inarticulate mass of fat and fury, clear into the street.

Then he turned and walked back into the restaurant, and, to his amazement, was met by the proprietor with a smile on his face.

"That's all right, young fellow. I had to put up a bluff before him, but I am glad that you kicked him out. He eats a lot, but he gives me lots of trouble, too. He is one of them mashers. You're a good sport, but I saw what he did. You ain't fired, and you had better sit down and have your own breakfast, now the rush is over. You've earned it."

"I think I will," said Dick. "I am hungry."

"Will you sit here?" said a quiet voice. Dick knew without looking that it was the new girl who had spoken.

He sat down at her table, with an odd reluctance to have her wait upon him.

"Thank you—er——"

"Maggie," she said demurely.

Their eyes met for the second time. "It isn't Maggie, it's Margaret," he declared positively.

The girl smiled—just the faintest bit.

"I want to thank you, Mr.—er——"

"Dick," he put in.

"I want to thank you, Mr. Dick, for everything—and for saying that he called you a liar."

On thinking it over afterward, Dick could not for the life of him remember a single thing that he had for breakfast that morning, but he knew that it was the best breakfast that he had ever eaten, and he remembered that the clock told him that it took a long time.

When he finally rose from the table, the proprietor said: "Well, young fellow, do you want a steady job?"

"No," answered Dick, smiling. "I must make a lot of money to-day."

"I pay good wages."

Dick shook his head.

"Well, sorry to lose you," said the proprietor, handing him a two-dollar bill. "And all of that ain't for being just head waiter, either, young fellow."

Dick took his hat down from the peg, and turned to speak to the girl. She was not in sight.

"Out in the kitchen, I suppose," murmured Dick.

He waited a few moments. She did not return. "What am I waiting for?" he said to himself irritably. "Just because I chanced to do a waiter girl a slight service is no reason for hanging around to say good-by to her. I don't know what I am thinking about!" he ejaculated, starting toward the door. "Good-by," he nodded to the proprietor as he passed the desk. "Oh, by the way," he added, with elaborate carelessness, as he opened the door, "I may drop in for lunch."

"Always glad to see you," responded the proprietor heartily.

"Well," smiled Dick, feeling the two-dollar bill in his pocket, as he strolled along, "that is pretty fair for a starter, and the day hardly begun yet. I believe I will go over and take a walk in the Park and a good smoke before I hunt for the next job. Smoking on my own money, too, this time," he laughed.

It was a bright, sunny morning, and Dick wandered about among the paths and along the drives, quite at peace with the world. At last his attention was attracted by a big red motor car. It was standing still. The chauffeur was under it, working at the machinery, and a florid, gray-mustached man was sitting in the tonneau, impatiently opening and shutting his watch.

"He looks like the pictures of Bannerton, who engineered the corner in K. & G. last fall," thought Dick.

The chauffeur's head emerged from under the car. "I can't seem to locate the trouble, Mr. Bannerton," he said.

"It is Bannerton!" exclaimed Dick.

Mr. Bannerton shut his watch with a vicious snap. "Come out from un-

der there, Albert," he ordered, "and hurry as fast as you can to the nearest telephone, and have a taxicab sent here for me. I am very late, as it is."

The chauffeur was off on the run.

Dick stepped forward. "Perhaps I could find the trouble, sir. I know this make of car pretty well."

"If you can, you will do me a great favor, young man. I am in a big hurry."

Dick wriggled under the car. His good angel was with him. Something had slipped, that was all. The trouble was so simple that it had escaped the chauffeur's eye.

"The car is all right now, sir," announced Dick.

"You have fixed it already! And now my chauffeur is gone!"

"I am considered a pretty good driver, sir," suggested Dick, seeing his chance, "and I am looking for a job."

"Get in, young man!" exclaimed Mr. Bannerton. "You have found it! Drive me to Wall Street as fast as the Lord—and the police—will let you! This is a hurry order."

As they emerged from the Park at the Plaza, and passed the Sherman statue, they saw another big, red car standing dead in the street, and an assistant chief of the fire department dancing around it like a madman, while his driver worked frantically at the gearing.

Dick deliberately stopped, and flashed a look at Mr. Bannerton. "Are you in a big hurry, sir?"

"I said so, didn't I? What are you stopping for?"

"Are you—game for a record trip, sir?"

"Yes! Confound you! Why don't you—"

"What is the matter, chief?" called Dick.

"Machine goes bad, and a big fire in Canal Street!"

"Get in!" exclaimed Dick, his eyes shining with a reckless light. "We'll give you a lift! You toot the horn for a clear track. I'll do the rest!"

The chief leaped into the car. "Bully for you!" he shouted. "Let 'er out!"

The car sprang down the Avenue like a shrieking red demon running amuck. The traffic scattered left and right. The side streets flashed by like telegraph poles by the windows of the limited. Faster and faster, block after block! Shooting by hotels and shops! Flashing, like a gleam of light, past Madison Square, Union Square, Astor Place! Cutting, like a screeching shell, through the traffic of the wholesale district!

"Canal Street!" yelled Dick. "And there's your fire!"

The chief sprang from the car. "Good boy!" he cried, with his eyes on the burning building. "You're the stuff! Come and see me at headquarters. Much obliged, sir." He vanished into the smoke.

Dick looked around at Mr. Bannerton. "I think that we have made up some time, sir," he observed calmly.

"Made up some time!" exclaimed Mr. Bannerton. "Good gracious, I should say that we had! I have always wanted to know just how fast this car could go, and now I know to the last notch. You are a wonder, young man, but get your speed down to somewhere near the ordinance, from now on, or we will be in trouble."

When the car stopped in front of Mr. Bannerton's office, he held out a hundred-dollar bill to Dick, and when Dick demurred, he said: "Take it, young man. You have earned it. I have had to pay that much on several occasions, when I had not been going half as fast as I did this morning," he added dryly.

He started up the steps of the building, and then came back. "By the way," he said casually, "I can tell you how to make that hundred-dollar bill look bigger."

"How, sir?"

"Buy L., P. & Q. this morning, and sell it this afternoon. It will skyrocket from the opening. This is for your private information. I don't often give a tip, but a man with the nerve to make the run you did deserves one. And it is nerve that counts in the Street."

"Thank you, sir," said Dick. "May

I let just one friend in on it?" he asked eagerly.

"All right," laughed Mr. Bannerton good-humoredly. "But only one, mind you," he added, as he turned away.

Dick looked meditatively down Wall Street. "Now, who is the sportiest broker that I know?" he murmured. "Ned Plemmer, of course!"

Dick was in Plemmer's office in another minute.

"Ned," he said, "here is a hundred dollars. I want you to buy me one hundred shares of L., P. & Q. at the opening of the market."

"Hello, Dick!" laughed Plemmer. "When did you get into the Street? Not long ago, or you would know that a hundred dollars is hardly margin enough for a hundred shares."

"No matter whether it is or not. You may sell me out if it drops the fraction of a point. It's a sure thing, I tell you. And, if you want to make a killing, buy some on your own account."

"Did you get your information from the old man?"

"No matter where I got it. It's official. And it's a cinch."

"All right, Dick," nodded Plemmer, after a moment. "I have had a hunch that something was doing in that stock. I'll buy a hundred for you, and a hundred for myself, and see what happens. It closed at seventy-eight yesterday."

"All right, Ned. This morning is the time to buy and this afternoon is the time to sell," said Dick significantly. "But that is between ourselves," he added.

"Certainly. Suppose we lunch together, and see how things look then."

"I—I believe that I have a half engagement to lunch with—a friend."

"Bring him along," said Plemmer heartily.

"Oh, I can't. It is way uptown, you know."

"All right. Drop in a little later, then, and see what is doing."

Dick returned shortly before noon. The ticker was sending out rapid yards of tape, all about L., P. & Q. Plemmer was jubilant.

"Eighty-three now, and still booming!" he cried.

As Dick ran the tape through his fingers, the door of an inner office opened, and the girl in the gray dress came out. She had a pencil and a pad in her hand.

At sight of Dick, she started, and flushed. Then, with a little smile and a quick nod of recognition, she walked rapidly to the entrance door, and went out.

Dick stared for a moment, and then made for the door.

"Dick! Dick! Come back here!" called Plemmer. "It is eighty-four now!"

Dick rushed out, unheeding, and reached the elevator just in time to have the door slammed in his face, and to see her looking out at him for a second as the car began to descend.

Dick stood staring into the shaft.

"Come back here, Dick!" called Plemmer, running into the hall. "Where on earth are you going? It has touched eighty-six."

"Who is that girl, Ned?"

"What girl?"

"Gray dress. Came out of your office just now, with a pad and a pencil in her hand."

"How do I know?" exclaimed Plemmer impatiently, as they walked back into the office. "There are dozens of them around here. Somebody's secretary or stenographer, likely," he added, fingering the tape. "Great Scott!" he exclaimed. "It is eighty-eight now! L., P. & Q. is a hummer!"

"Let's go and get some lunch," said Dick.

"I thought you said you had an engagement uptown."

"It is off," responded Dick briefly.

All through luncheon Dick puzzled about the girl in the gray dress. Evidently, she had left the restaurant. Why had she ever been there, at all? What was she doing down in Wall Street? And where the deuce was she now? How could he find her?

"What is the matter with you, Dick?" asked Plemmer. "You look as if L.,

P. & Q. was slumping, instead of making you money hand over fist."

"Money isn't everything, Ned," he remarked gloomily.

But when L., P. & Q. touched ninety-two, at two-thirty p. m., he began to take notice.

"Sell, Ned!" he exclaimed. "I'll take my profits."

A few minutes later Plemmer announced: "I have sold your stock at ninety-two, Dick."

"That's good. Give me the proceeds in bills, Ned. Hundred dollar ones."

"Bills! Wouldn't you rather have a check?"

"No. I have a particular use for bills to-day," smiled Dick.

As he walked up Wall Street, he did a little figuring. "By Jove!" he exclaimed. "I have made a good living to-day, all right. That ought to please dad. Well," he added comfortably, "I think I will take a taxicab up to the club."

But somehow the club did not appeal to him that afternoon. "It is deadly just sitting around after a fellow has really been doing things," he murmured as he left the club, and, turning into the Avenue, set out briskly northward toward his home. "I might as well break the news to dad now as later," he chuckled. "There is one thing that dad mentioned that I have not acquired as yet," he reflected, as he walked along, "and that is a wife. That would be going some! Wouldn't it surprise him if I should walk in on him to-night with my pockets full of money and a wife? There is the girl in gray now," he murmured half absently. "If she—confound it!" he broke off. "Where is the girl in gray?"

As he walked on, he saw a long line of carriages and automobiles in the next block above. "Some one is giving something," he said to himself. "I am glad I am not in it."

He glanced idly at the occupants as he passed the waiting line of vehicles, bowing here and there. Suddenly he gave a start. There, alone, in a limousine, sat the girl in gray! Only she was

not in gray, but in something wonderful and indescribable.

Dick walked deliberately up to the car, opened the door, and said: "Where are you going, Miss Margaret?"

"How do you do, Mr. Dick?" she returned calmly. "I am going to the Merryfield reception."

Dick glanced up the Avenue. "I had not noticed that the awning was in front of their door. I am going, too! It has been rather a busy day, and I had forgotten about the reception. There are a few things that I want to talk to you about—masquerading for instance," he went on pointedly.

"As a head waiter?" she put in.

"No, as a waitress, and as a Wall Street secretary."

She laughed lightly. "I really will not have a moment of my own at the reception," she said. "I am not a guest. I am there on business."

"On business!" exclaimed Dick.

"Yes," declared the girl, laughing deliciously in his face, "on business. I am a reporter, Mr. Dick."

"A reporter!" exclaimed Dick, his eyes opening in sudden comprehension. "And you have been doing stunts to-day! Local color for the *Sunday Supplement*! The real life of a waitress! Wall Street from the worker's standpoint! And all that sort of thing."

She nodded and her dimples showed elusively. A girl can't help her dimples, of course—and perhaps she didn't intend it—but they finished Dick.

The line of vehicles began moving up.

"Please don't go to that deadly reception," he besought impetuously. "I'll get every living thing you want to know about it from Dollie—Miss Merryfield, you know—and telephone it to you. Don't go! Talk to me instead! I will give you a story that will make your paper sit up and take notice."

"What about?"

"About me! The story of My Day! It's the real thing."

"May we publish it?" she asked, looking at him doubtfully. "With names and all?"

Dick considered for a moment, then

suddenly his eyes danced. "Yes," he said, "but there is one more scene in to-day's show. And you must see it," he added impressively. "You must see the return of the son who left home this morning without a penny in his pocket. It is not a family row, you know," he added eagerly. "Dad is a corking good fellow."

The girl hesitated.

"Let the reception slide," urged Dick. "Dismiss your car, and walk up the Avenue with me. It is all right. You are a reporter after a good story. I will tell it to you, as far as it has gone, on the way up to our house. Then come in and hear what I say to dad. That is the climax of the whole thing, and you may send the story to your paper, names and all, on condition," he laughed, "that you give it in full—especially the climax. Well, what do you say? Do you accept the proposition? I am Richard Hurling, Junior."

"Yes," answered the girl, with a frank laugh. "I can't afford to miss a good story. I am Margaret Dane."

As they walked along, Dick gave her a lively account of his day. He told it well, and she turned to him with sparkling eyes and flushing cheeks as he described the run to the fire.

"It is fine! Simply fine!" she exclaimed. "Any climax would seem tame after that!"

"No, it won't. You will find the climax even more exciting," declared Dick. "Oh, why will she look like that?" he murmured under his breath. "She was pretty enough before to drive a man mad. I am going to marry that girl," he declared to himself with fervor. "If I ever get a chance," he added. "Or can make one," he amended boldly.

When they reached the door of his home, she hesitated.

"The idea of a reporter backing out and letting a good story get away!" taunted Dick. "For you know the bargain is that you can't print any of it unless you see it through and print it all."

"I am not backing out a bit, only——"

"Is my father at home?" asked Dick of the servant who let them in.

"Yes, sir. He is in the library, sir," answered the man.

"Now for the climax, Miss Dane!" said Dick, in a low tone, as they entered the room.

"Good evening, dad," he said. "I have come to submit my report on the subject of making a living. This is Miss Blake, father. My father, Miss Blake, Miss Blake is a reporter," went on Dick rapidly, as Miss Dane started at the name of Blake and tried to speak, "and my day has been such a success that she wishes to interview me on how to make money, so I have asked her to come in and hear me tell the story to you."

"Please sit down, Miss Blake," said Mr. Hurling, with a puzzled look at his son. "Well, Dick?" he added interrogatively.

"First as to making a living," said Dick, figuring rapidly on a sheet of paper that lay on the desk.

For being head waiter in Donovan's restaurant	\$ 2
For driving automobile sixty miles an hour from the Sherman statue to Canal Street.....	100
Profit on the hundred dollars used as margin in purchase of L. P. & Q. stock, less broker's commission of twenty-five dollars	1,375
Total	\$1,477

Dick put down his pencil, and took a long envelope out of his pocket. "We won't say anything about the odd money, father. I have spent some of that, but here are fourteen one hundred bills. Please count them, dad. I made every cent of them to-day with my hands—and my head."

Mr. Hurling absently fingered the bills. "But, Dick," he said, "I don't quite understand. I remember quite distinctly that L. P. & Q. took a big jump to-day, for I happened to be on the wrong side of the market, but sixty miles an hour from the Sherman statue to Canal Street, I really——"

"It is all true, dad. Details will come later, as the newspapers say, but you will have to take them on trust for the

present, for I have something more important to tell you."

"Very well, Dick," smiled his father. "It was a good day's work, my boy. You have beaten my first day in New York by a long way. Now, what is the other thing?"

"Do you remember, dad," said Dick, looking resolutely away from Miss Dane, "that you said last night you would give half you owned to see me settled down to work and married to the right kind of a girl, one who would be a help to me?"

Mr. Hurling nodded.

Miss Dane stirred uneasily. "Perhaps you would prefer that I withdraw," she said. "I am sure that you would prefer not to discuss so personal a matter before me, and——"

Dick waved her protest aside. "Remember your duty to your paper, Miss Blake," he said reproachfully.

Then, turning to his father, he went on rapidly: "I met her to-day. She is everything you mentioned and a whole lot of things you forgot; for instance, she is the prettiest girl in New York, and the most elusive. She wouldn't have me now, I know that, but I am going to propose to her every day of my life from now on, on the off chance that she will get tired of saying no, and, if she ever does, I will be the happiest fellow in——"

"Dick, are you crazy?" put in his father. "Any girl would be a fool to take you. What have you to marry on?"

"Fifty times fourteen hundred dollars is seventy thousand dollars," answered Dick serenely. "You told me that you would give me fifty dollars for every one I made to-day, you know, dad. We could start in on that in a small way."

"That's so," acknowledged Mr. Hurling, with a laugh, "and I will stick to my bargain. Well, Dick, what is her name?"

"Her name," answered Dick composedly, "is Margaret Dane!"

Margaret started from her chair. "Mr. Hurling, I——" she began.

"Dad," broke in Dick. "Miss Blake

wants to tell you about Miss Dane. I forgot to mention that they are inseparable," he added audaciously.

"I do not want to say a word about anything, except that I must go," gasped Margaret.

Dick's father seemed hardly to hear her. "Dane," he was saying half to himself. "Alfred Dane used to publish the *Sentinel* back in my old town years ago. He was a man in a thousand. Can it be that Miss Dane is a daughter of his, Miss Blake?"

"I—I believe that she is," answered Margaret in a strangled voice.

"Well, Dick, if you get a wife who comes from that stock you will be in luck, and I will be a proud man to have her for a daughter."

"Mr. Carlton would like to see you, sir," announced a servant. "He is in the drawing-room."

"Please excuse me for a moment, Miss Blake," said Mr. Hurling, as he went out.

Dick looked across the table at Margaret. "Do you intend to use the story in full—names and all?" he asked. He tried to make his voice sound careless, but he looked a little scared.

"No, you have spoiled it with an anticlimax," she returned coolly.

"Didn't it interest you in the least?" ventured Dick.

"Not in the least. Besides, you are utterly absurd and—awfully audacious."

"It is too bad," mourned Dick. "You know dad said that he would give half he owned to see me married to a girl like you, and dad is worth about twenty millions. We are losing a lot, you see."

"You are utterly absurd," repeated Margaret, but this time an involuntary ripple of laughter got mixed up with her words.

"Is that a sign of relenting?" asked Dick hopefully.

Margaret rose with dignity. "Good afternoon, Mr. Hurling. Please make my adieu to your father," she added, as she turned toward the door.

"I am going a little way with you, please," ventured Dick.

"You are?" she returned, with a rising inflection.

"Yes, I want to make you the first of my daily proposals, and I can always talk better out of doors," answered Dick cheerfully.

Margaret bit her lip.

Dick picked up a cane as they passed through the hall. "I am going to notch each proposal on my stick," he said, "and show you the scars from time to time."

Margaret tried hard to keep her lips prim, but an unbidden gust of laughter made them pretty.

She looked at Dick for a moment in helpless perplexity. "You absurd boy! What shall I do with you?" she exclaimed, flushing deliciously.

"If you don't mind," suggested Dick, "you might tell me how many notches I shall be obliged to cut in the stick."

"It seems rather a pity to spoil such a pretty stick," said Margaret irrelevantly.

"How many?" repeated Dick, as they went down the steps.

"What a beautiful sunset glow!" she cried, looking westward across the Park.

"How many?" again asked Dick.

"What a perfectly absurd question!" declared Margaret.

"How many?" persisted Dick.

"How can I tell you—beforehand?" she exclaimed at last, in desperation. And the sunset or something made her face very pink.



THE LILT OF THE SONG

TO walk in the woods in the calm of the day,
 With the lilt of a song in your heart,
 The crisp of the autumn to burgeon your way
 With colors surpassing all art,
 With cracking of twig, and the crackle of leaf,
 The sigh of the breeze in the bough and the sheaf—
 Oh, who can think trouble, and who can think grief,
 Or who can think wrong
 In tune to the lilt of that song?

The whirr of the bird in the bushes ahead,
 With the lilt of a song in her wing;
 The yield of the mosses wherever you tread,
 As soft as the air of the spring;
 The green of the pine, and the blue of the sky,
 The joy of the rivulets rioting by—
 Oh, who can think sorrow, and murmur, and sigh
 While stepping along
 In tune to the lilt of that song?

The shimmer of sun in the depths of the glade,
 With the lilt of a song in its glance;
 The fanciful figures in shadows portrayed
 In stately and dignified dance;
 The quiet of evening, yet everywhere rife
 With spirit of growth, and the spirit of life—
 Oh, who can think trial, and who can think strife,
 Or fetter, or thong,
 In tune to the lilt of that song?

JOHN KENDRICK BANGS.



F any of my readers are discouraged by their lack of progress at bridge, if they have almost decided altogether to abjure the wretched game, because of their stupidity and dull-wittedness, let them be of good cheer. Despair not, for even the best players are prone to play badly—on occasions. Here is a remarkable example.

I was watching a very close rubber the other day at a New York bridge club. Mr. F. B. was playing a rather simple heart hand. The score was twenty-four all on the rubber game. Now, Mr. B. is one of the five best players in the club, and I have not known him to butcher a hand in three years. He held five hearts with the three top honors, three losing spades, three losing diamonds, and the jack and ten of clubs. Dummy had nothing but a practically solid suit of clubs, three spades to the queen, and two small hearts. The leader opened a singleton club, which Mr. B. took in his own hand with the jack of clubs. He then, very properly, led two rounds of trumps, the king and queen, to which everybody followed. Eight trumps were now out, and Mr. B. still had three in his hand. Instead of playing his ace of hearts and dropping the other two trumps—they were, it turned out, divided, one in each of the adversaries' hands—he paused for a long while as if considering some mighty problem. Finally, and with a heart-breaking sigh, he led the ten of clubs which the leader ruffed with

promptitude and an air of great relief. The leader and his partner then proceeded to make three diamonds and three spades—one of which tricks was made by third hand who ruffed the dummy's queen of spades with his last trump.

The leader and third hand had won the odd trick, the game, and the rubber!

I was somewhat amazed at B.'s apparent imbecility. Here was a really first-rate player "chucking" a rubber in the most finished and, apparently, deliberate manner. The onlookers laughed merrily, as is their cruel wont, and Mr. B. rose from the table and drew up a chair beside me, as if seeking succor in his dire affliction.

"What was the matter?" I asked, with a show, at least, of sympathy.

"Why!" he said. "That was a very uncanny incident and I hope that it will never happen to me again. The truth is that we have just closed up our fiscal year at my office, and I have been all day trying to balance my books and trace a wretched forty-seven dollars, which has somehow been lost in the mazes of my cash ledger. My brain was thoroughly tired and full of figures. When I had dropped eight trumps I stopped to calculate. 'Eight from thirteen,' I said, 'leaves seven, three of which are in my hand. Therefore my adversaries have four trumps between them, and it would be folly for me to go on with the trump lead as the whole diamond suit is against me, and, probably, the spades as well. This is a lesson for me. Hereafter I shan't play bridge for high points when my brain is fagged and tired.'"

An experience somewhat similar to this recently befell me, and I have even now, a month after the incident, hardly recovered from the shame of it.

I was taken to a delightful, white-walled club in Boston, on Beacon Hill—indeed, it is the pleasantest club I know of in America—by a Boston friend of mine. We climbed to the cheerful card room on the second floor, and cut into an excellent rubber of bridge. My friend, as if wishing to atone to his club mates for our intrusion into their game, introduced me to them with a somewhat florid sally.

"Mr. Bruce," he said, "has played in all the card clubs of Europe, and has even written very learnedly about the game in AINSLEE'S MAGAZINE."

The gentlemen did not seem at all alarmed by this account of my prowess. I recognized the names of two of the gentlemen as very great experts at the game. I cut with one of these "cracks," against my friend and another of them. I cut the deal and declared no trumps on a moderate hand, containing, among other things, the jack, five, two of clubs. My left-hand adversary asked if he might play, and then led the six of clubs, from—as it turned out—the king, ten, eight, six.

Dummy went down with the ace, queen, nine, three of clubs.

"Now, my boy," said I to myself. "You are on your best behavior. Play up like a little wizard and surprise these sleepy Bostonians!"

I began furiously to think and scheme and plot out the undoing of my luckless adversaries. The first thing to do was, obviously, to apply the rule of eleven and try to count and place the club suit. Now, as the reader knows, there is nothing easier than applying the rule of eleven. A child of ten can do it. One simply has to deduct the card led—in this case the six—from eleven and the difference will be the number of cards higher than the card led held jointly by the dummy and the other two players, or, in this instance, five.

I dare say, that, in the course of the last ten years, I have applied this rule correctly upward of twenty thousand

times, but on this particular occasion some demon of perversity, some imp of Satan, got into my brain and I became firmly convinced that, as six from eleven left five, therefore the *leader* must have five better clubs in his hand than the six spot. Therefore, it was hopeless to try to make the clubs. As a result of this asinine conviction, I never, after making my jack, tried for the club suit when it was patent to the meanest capacity that I could make all four of the clubs in dummy by twice leading the suit through the leader. Finally, by some inspired bit of prophetic wisdom, I *did* play the ace of clubs which just saved the game for us when any beginner could have made two by cards with the hand, a clear loss of three tricks.

I remember reading, in one or two critical works on the general subject of Americans and American life, that Bostonians were "a curious race of people, with customs—but no manners." With all the emphasis of which I am capable I rise to give the lie to the first author of that abominable calumny. Never, in the entire course of my life, have I witnessed such urbanity, such restraint, such courtly nonchalance as oozed from my good-natured partner and my even better-natured adversary—but *his* good nature was more or less to be expected, to be sure. The painful and regrettable incident was then and there buried in a wordless, beautiful, and almost cloistral hush.

To change the subject a little, I beg to offer what I consider the greatest instance of good luck at bridge in my personal experience.

At this last New Year's time, a party of ladies and gentlemen went to the Berkshires for the year-end—one says "week-end"—why not "year-end"? The house party consisted of nine people, and lasted five days. They were all enthusiastic bridge players. The stakes were invariably two and a half cents. At the end of the visit there were seven losers and two winners. One of the winners, Miss X., was ahead to the tune of only fourteen dollars, but the other, Mr. C., had actually won one hundred

and ninety-two dollars. The next day on the train going to New York the two winners, Miss X. and Mr. C., played against each other for six consecutive rubbers. At the end of the séance Miss X. had lost her fourteen dollars to Mr. C. and eleven dollars besides, so that in six days' time Mr. C. was the only winner out of nine more or less constant players. Here was a remarkable run of luck, nearly two hundred and twenty dollars in six days, and at only two and a half cent points.

I think that few people realize how little heavy bridge gambling there is today, in America. Let us consider only one little detail of the matter—the card money! At every well-regulated American club there is a slight charge for the cards and the privilege of playing. In many clubs this charge is twenty-five cents. In even the most expensive clubs, such as the "Union" and the "Knickerbocker," the charge is only fifty cents, so that a really constant player could not well spend over one hundred and fifty dollars in a year for his card money. In ten years his card money might mount up to as high a figure as two thousand dollars. But, in the days of real gambling at whist—that is, in London at the beginning of the nineteenth century—the amounts spent for card money by the great bucks and beaux at such clubs as Crockford's, White's, Graham's, Brooks', and Boodle's were really appalling.

It must be remembered that it was the opulent custom of those times to call loudly for fresh cards after the completion of every rubber. Major Aubrey, for instance, who died in eighteen hundred and thirty-two, spent upward of three hundred thousand dollars for card money alone. This Major Aubrey was a famous player and prided himself on always having fresh cards with which to begin a new rubber.

Three hundred thousand dollars seems like a vast amount of money to spend on buying playing cards, but it must be borne in mind that, in those days, it was a not infrequent thing to see a party of gentlemen literally up to their knees in cards. Cards, too, were ex-

tremely expensive to manufacture a hundred years ago, as they were all made by hand, one card at a time, and with the utmost pains and care.

Here is the latest bridge yarn, and one that bears, I think, internal evidence of truth as well as of humor:

Mrs. X.—"What does Mrs. Singleton discard from?"

Mrs. Y.—"Well, my dear, to judge from the prizes which she gives away at her bridge tournaments, I think she must discard from the attic!"

I am glad to be able to quote a remarkably pretty problem hand, composed by Ernest Bergholt, the well-known English inventor of card problems. It is a thirteen-card puzzle and all the cards are supposed to be exposed.

Z. has dealt, and, seeing that he has a hopeless hand, has declared an original spade. A., the leader, looks at his hand and doubles. Z. declares himself as satisfied, and A. leads the king of clubs. The remaining hands are now exposed. The problem is for A. and B. to win all thirteen tricks against any possible defense on the part of Y. and Z.

The hands are as follows:

Z. (dealer): 7, 6, 3, 2, hearts; 8, 7, 4, clubs; 9, 8, 7, 5, diamonds; 7, 6, spades.

A. (leader): King, queen, jack, 5, hearts; ace, king, queen, 9, clubs; 10, diamonds; queen, jack, 3, 2, spades.

Y. (dummy): Ace, 10, 9, hearts; jack, 10, 5, 2, clubs; queen, jack, 2, diamonds; king, 9, 5, spades.

B. (third hand): 8, 4, hearts; 6, 3, clubs; ace, king, 6, 4, 3, diamonds; ace, 10, 8, 4, spades.

The solution of this difficult and perplexing hand will be found at the end of this article.

Again, I have been working away on behalf of my readers!

They have listened so faithfully to so many of my old stories that I felt I really ought to pay them back for their loyalty and pains. As I judged that more than half of them are probably members of bridge clubs, I have been

busy in preparing a few hints on how they should behave in a bridge "wrangle," so that their adversaries shall not get the best of them. In bridge playing we should all strive to become, just as all the students at Oxford strive to become, senior—that is, "Adept"—wranglers. Here are a few golden rules for my readers to remember in their efforts to become wranglers:

(1.) Remember that, in every wrangle, there are onlookers as well as wranglers. Proceed therefore to make more noise than all the other wranglers put together. As no one can make out what any one is talking about, the noisiest and most boisterous of the wranglers—i. e. yourself—is certain to gain the applause and admiration of the gallery.

(2.) Always base your criticism of a play on the *results*. Never consider that a play was made according to rule; that it saved the game; that no information was obtainable to show the play to be unwise, or that your partner only made it because of some previous bad play on your part. Simply scold and scold and scold.

(3.) If any of the wranglers catch you up and prove you to be, in reality, the sole offender, open wide thy mouth and scream as mortal man hath never screamed before. This will subdue the enemy even more effectively than by asking them questions about a previous blunder, as, for instance:

"Oh, I did, did I? Well, then, how about your first no trumper, when you went to bed with two red aces—eh?"

(4.) If you should ever revoke, refuse, with your last breath, and until you become black in the face, to believe anything so improbable and absurd. Stick to it. Show them no namby-pamby concession or acquiescence.

(5.) If you incur any penalty whatsoever, always insist that it is ungentlemanly for the adversaries to take advantage of it. Add that you "*thought* this was a gentleman's game, but you see now that you were never in your life more grossly mistaken."

(6.) If the adversaries incur a pen-

alty, leap boldly at their throats and, as Mr. Longfellow so beautifully said, "be a hero in the strife."

(7.) If a lady is carrying on the fracas with you, you will need to be particularly firm, as women are treacherous and implacable beings at best. Offer to leave the matter to any of the onlookers—who were not looking—or to the waiter or to your partner, but never to *another woman*, as these creatures sometimes prove loyal to their sex at the least expected moments.

(8.) When your partner scowls or looks daggers at you, then is the appointed time to pitch right in and assault him verbally, before he has time even to frame his complaint against you in words.

(9.) When you have said your say and wrangled as long as you wish, you should always end the joust by exclaiming: "Well, what is the use of arguing about it? I don't see where the pleasure is in fighting, and why you always begin these scenes is really more than I can understand!"

Before I leave the matter of criticism and wrangling I really must pause to admire and pay tribute to the depth of meaning with which some players are able to imbue the play of their cards. I have often heard that the late Henry Jones (Cavendish) was able, after the play of the fifth trick at whist, to place correctly the remaining cards in the four hands, but even "Cavendish" would have been staggered by the intelligence that many of my friends and club mates like to claim is imparted by their silly leads and false-cardings.

Here is an instance, gathered, at a late hour, at a friend's house. Mr. L. leads me the jack of a suit. At the end of the hand he breaks out with: "Why didn't you return my lead? You saw me lead the jack, didn't you? You must have known that it was a singleton!"

A little later in the session he leads me a jack. When I gain the lead I return his suit only to have it trumped by the dealer. This time he fairly explodes: "Why, in Heaven's name, did you return my lead? Couldn't you see that I led the jack? I *must* be leading

from king, jack, ten. Why don't you try to keep your eyes open?"

Yes, I am often lost in amazement at the amount of knowledge we are supposed to have gained by the fall of the cards. I am afraid that the cards played by the majority of bridgers are a little like Virgil's ungallant remark about the fair sex: "*Varium et mutabile semper femina.*"

So many readers have written to me, from time to time, about the little six and seven-card problems that I have quoted in these pages for their benefit, that I think they must be popular with the majority of bridge lovers, and I am accordingly quoting a very clever one, this time the work of Mr. W. H. Whitfield, the card editor of *The Field*. While it somewhat resembles a puzzle of Mr. R. F. Foster's, which I once reprinted in this magazine, it is enough removed from it, I am sure, to give my readers some little worry and annoyance.

Only seven cards are in each hand. The hands are as follows:

A. (dealer and leader): 10, 4, hearts; king, 7, clubs; king, 9, 3, diamonds.

Y. (left of leader): Ace, 9, 8, 3, hearts; 10, 3, clubs; jack, diamonds.

B. (dummy): Jack, hearts; queen, 4, diamonds; ace, king, 9, 5, spades.

Z. (right of leader): Ace, queen, clubs; ace, 10, 8, diamonds; queen, jack, spades.

Spades are trumps. A. is to lead, and, with B. as a partner, is to take six out of the seven tricks against any possible defense by Y. and Z.

The solution of the problem will be found at the end of this article.

Solution of the thirteen-card spade problem quoted in the body of the foregoing article. The italicized card wins the trick.

Trick 1. *King clubs*, 2, 3, 4.

Trick 2. 10 diamonds, jack, *king*, 5.

Y. must cover or he makes A.'s play far more simple.

Trick 3. 3 diamonds, 7, *jack spades*, 2 diamonds.

Trick 4. 2 spades, 5, 8, 6.

Trick 5. 4 diamonds, 8, *queen spades*, queen diamonds.

Trick 6. 3 spades, 9, 10, 7.

Trick 7. *Ace spades*, 2 hearts, 5 hearts, king spades.

It matters not what Z. discards here. His entire hand is powerless to affect the issue.

Trick 8. *Ace diamonds*, 9, jack hearts; 9 hearts.

Trick 9. 6 diamonds, 3 hearts, queen, hearts, 10 hearts.

Trick 10. 4 *spades*, 7 clubs, king hearts, and—now what is Y. to do? If he throws his ace of hearts, the 8 hearts becomes good in B.'s hand and A. can take the twelfth and thirteenth tricks with his ace and queen of clubs. If, however, Y. throws a club, A.'s three clubs all become good. In any event, A. and B. take all thirteen tricks and score the grand slam.

Solution of the seven-card spade problem quoted in the foregoing article. The italicized card wins the trick.

Trick 1. 7 clubs, 3 clubs, 5 *spades*, queen clubs.

A tempting wrong solution would be for A. to lead the 3 of diamonds, to which B. plays the queen of diamonds. This could easily be defeated by Z.'s refusing to win the trick.

Trick 2. Queen diamonds, 8, *king*, jack.

If Z. wins this trick with the ace of diamonds it is clear that Y. and Z. can take no more tricks. A. will play the 3 of diamonds instead of the king. He will then discard two hearts on his spades and then lead through Z.'s 8 and 10 of diamonds up to his (A.'s) king and 9.

Trick 3. King clubs, 10, 9 *spades*, ace clubs.

Trick 4. *Ace spades*, jack, 3 diamonds, 3 hearts.

Trick 5. *King spades*, queen, 9 diamonds, 8 hearts.

Trick 6. Jack hearts, 10 diamonds, 4 hearts, *ace hearts*.

Trick 7. 9 hearts, 4 diamonds, ace diamonds, 10 hearts.

A. and B. have captured six tricks and Y. and Z. have taken but one—i. e. the ace of hearts.

THE THUNDER STORM



♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ SAMUEL GORDON ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥



ALL day there had been thunder in the air. For a long time the blue leaden pall had hung over the hills to the south, but now it was unrolling itself with a sort of stealthy indolence toward Wootton Grange. From her folding stool by the French window Lady Magrath watched the mighty mass crawling on like a threatening monster, swallowing up inch by inch the azure expanse in front. From early morning she had felt the coming elemental upheaval in her blood. The seething turbulence within seemed to dizzy her outlook, and made her see things in grotesque proportions. Like the impending storm, she was fraught with untold possibilities.

With moody impatience, she clawed at the book in her lap. The storm was coming on too slowly for her. She hated storms. They gave her a headache, and the lightning frightened her out of her wits. But she longed for the rain; she wanted the sluices of the heavens to open and let loose the deluge. Not to scatter the brooding heat haze that weighed on the landscape as it pressed on her soul. She almost laughed as she thought of the pettiness of the end she wished achieved by the gigantic forces of nature. She wanted the rain, for then the lawn behind the shrubbery would be converted into a squelching morass, and there would be no more tennis for the day.

At last! With frightful suddenness a forked tongue of flame quivered

through the air, quenched instantly, it would seem, by a mighty avalanche of rain. Through the crashing boom of the thunder Lady Magrath's quick ear caught the sound of girlishly hysterical laughter. And here they came tearing along, Olive Grier and Jack Hinton, making a desperate dash for shelter.

"What do you think of that, Val?" panted the girl, as she came to a stop under the projecting terrace roof, and shook her drenched mane of tawny hair.

"You'd better not ask what I think of you," replied Lady Magrath coldly. "Now, don't stop to argue, Olive, but go up at once and change."

"Certainly I'll go, but wasn't it a shame? Just as the game had got dreadfully exciting. We were neck to neck for the finish, weren't we, Mr. Hinton?"

"Olive!" exclaimed Lady Magrath, half rising.

With a pout and a rebellious laugh, the girl turned and fled.

"And what shall I do with you?" continued Lady Magrath, shooting a side glance at the young man, who was rubbing his chin with an air of embarrassment. "If you'll ring for Timmins he'll take you up to Sir Ralph's dressing room."

Hinton uttered an awkward laugh.

"What on earth for? I wouldn't exchange the soaking I got for—for a king's wardrobe. Think it'll hurt me?"

This time she looked at him full, taking in his six foot of splendid animalism, and silently agreeing with him that he seemed immune to the infirmities of the flesh.

"You must have been interested not to have seen it coming along," she said somewhat scornfully, indicating with a jerk of her head the downpour outside.

"I—that is, we were," he stammered. "You know, Val, I thought I was a bit of a crack with the racquet, but I could hardly hold my own with her. She sends you scurrying all over the place, she takes your breath away with her returns, she——" He pulled up short, checking the rush of his words as he saw her eyes on his face.

"She what, Jack? Do go on."

"Well, she certainly seems to have a style of her own," he added lamely.

"A style that made you forget I was sitting here alone."

"We—I left you reading, Val."

"Pretending to, you mean," she exclaimed, her eyes spurring fire. "What else was I to do? Make a fuss—or come and play gooseberry?"

He stepped back, visibly startled.

"Val, what are you saying? A mere kid, with her hair not even up?"

She leaped to her feet, pulled the hangings fiercely across the window, and touching the electric switch, flooded the semigloom with light. Then she stood scanning him closely for a few moments, her hand to her heart.

"Jack, I want you to tell me something—I want you to tell me that I am as much to you as I ever was."

"You are, Val," he said, a tone of sullen doggedness in his voice.

"I believe you, Jack. I believe you because I want to believe you—oh, so much! The thought of somebody coming between us drives me mad. Promise you won't play tennis with Olive any more."

There was just the faintest shadow of hesitation in his reply. She could not see the hand he clinched behind his back as he said:

"If you ask me, Val, of course, I promise."

"You see, Jack," she continued eagerly, "that's what it has come to. I'm jealous even of children. Yes, Jack; it serves me right. I laid up for myself my own punishment. When you first—what shall I say?—first came on

the scene, I intended you for nothing more than a mere plaything, a toy of the moment, to be thrown aside when the whim was over. But the joke has become a deadly serious business. Jack, I feel that if ever you left off giving me your love of your own free will, I should beg it of you as a charity."

He made a sharp movement which might have expressed pity or displeasure.

"Don't, Val! Now you're talking like a child yourself."

She drew herself up to her full height, which brought her face almost level with his.

"All right, Jack; then I'll talk to you like a woman—like a woman who wants to make one last throw of the dice before it's too late. Do you remember that night on the launch last autumn when you asked me to run away with you?"

"Of course, I remember," he said sharply.

"I laughed you off, but you don't know how near I was to saying yes. Jack, you will see how much I trust you when you see how frank I am going to be with you. That night I was treacherous to you. My ears were listening to your words, but my thoughts were with—him. I felt I had to give him another chance, although my heart was dragging me over to you. Jack, I had a fancy, an absurd fancy, that lately he had been becoming more alive, less of an animated mechanism. I thought that perhaps a dim recollection was crossing his mind that ours had been a love match—a love match!" She laughed shrilly as she repeated the words. "And then what happened? A week later he told me with all the casualness in the world that he had booked his passage to Bombay. He had suddenly discovered that his museum was sadly deficient in certain species of Indian butterflies. He did not know how long he would be away. He came back as suddenly as he had gone. He was glad to say he had been most successful. He brought back a wonderful collection of new specimens. I don't know under what heading he classed Olive."

"Did you know he was bringing her?" asked Hinton pensively.

"I didn't. But I wasn't surprised. He's not in the habit of consulting me about his arrangements. All he deigned to tell me was that Olive was the daughter of a cousin of his—I always understood that he hadn't a shred of a relative in the world—and that she was too bright and pretty to be wasted on India. That's just his way; considerate, most considerate to everybody except— But there, Jack, I'm not going over the old ground again. I've done my duty to him, more than my duty. I waited for him to come back. But I won't wait any longer. Oh!"

A terrific clap of thunder punctuated her sentence. It shook even Jack Hinton's steady hand in the act of lighting a cigarette. A defiant, half-frenzied look had come into Lady Magrath's fathomless eyes as she turned and placed her hand on his shoulder.

"Jack," she whispered, "it's got to end."

He stood silent, looking at her expectantly.

"I'm going to take matters into my own hands," she continued.

"What are you going to do?" he asked, with puckered brows.

"Leave that to me, Jack. There's only one thing you need do, and that is—to stand by me. You will, Jack, won't you?"

"Of course I will."

"That's all right, then. I want you to go home now. I'll feel more free when I know you're out of earshot. Go quick, while the storm is still here to help me. It makes a splendid ally. Take the white motor. You can send it back with your man. I'll come after you as soon as I can, and let you know—what there is to know."

He seemed inclined to linger, but with passionate importunity she pushed him from the room. She waited on the alert till the car had whirled out of hearing, and then she sat down to prepare herself for the great purpose in hand. She had tried so often to piece together the events of the past

into a well-ordered scheme. Perhaps she would succeed this time. She would not hark back to her marriage; she had scrutinized it too frequently with microscopic eye to have oversighted any point that might redeem it from failure. If there had been, there would probably have been no Jack Hinton. Oh, yes, it had been great fun to have the neighboring young squire dangling, doglike, at her heels—he, the boy Apollo, just down from Oxford, and she, the acknowledged beauty queen of the county.

She was so used to conquests; in fact, had grown tired of them. But there was such an element of novelty about this, a certain piquancy in the frank admiration of the lad for the older woman, with her ripe worldliness. It was more than the ordinary calf love; it had about it a tinge of the blind, uncompromising chivalry of the knight-errant of old. It was very pleasant and very touching to her in the chilling consciousness of her growing loneliness; and it had ended as she had told him just before.

And even then she would not have spoken if Olive Grier had not wrung the confession from her. Ever since the arrival of the girl, some three weeks ago, there had been a sense of danger upon Lady Magrath. At first, she would not define it, but gradually, as Olive's presence in the house became more pronounced, there flitted across Lady Magrath's mind vague comparisons between the fresh, free-growing grace of wild field flowers and the laborious beauty of hothouse blooms.

She did not distrust her ascendancy over Jack Hinton, but why run any unnecessary risks? Fate was niggardly; it had too big a list of clients to be overgenerous in chances to any one of them. She was making a bold bid for happiness, and there was no time to be lost.

The storm was guttering away, but the tension of her nerves had not relaxed. She was glad of it. She knew the psychological moment was there, waiting for her to use it. With a sudden gesture of resolution, she flung

from the room and rapidly swept down the long corridor, at the end of which was her husband's study. He looked up at her entrance, his magnifying glass poised in midair.

"Can you spare me a few minutes?" she asked brusquely.

"Why, certainly. Nothing the matter, I hope." There was no trace of alarm in his metallic voice.

"There's a great deal the matter, Ralph. And I want your assistance to set it right."

"Oh, anything I can do——"

"You are the only one that can do it. Ralph, I want you to give me my freedom."

He tapped the table with the magnifying glass for a moment or two before he replied:

"That's rather a peculiar request, Valentia."

"I don't know why it should seem peculiar to you. I had thought that to a certain extent you would be prepared for it."

"Perhaps I am. But, even then, it seems—well, to come a bit straight from the shoulder."

"To my mind, that's far better than beating about the bush. Well?" she prompted him, as he remained silent. "I don't know what you have been thinking all these years."

"I'm not sure that I've allowed myself to think, Valentia. I didn't know that you would ever call on me to express an opinion."

"Then, as you have never thought, you may now feel all the more inclined to act."

"That's absurd. You forget, my dear girl, that the thing is not quite so simple as it looks. I am fully aware that we have not hit it together for a long time. But the English law does not, fortunately or unfortunately, recognize mere incompatibility of temperament as a sufficient excuse for divorce. There must be more tangible grounds than that."

She made a sharp turnabout, till she stood with her back to him. Then she said, slowly and half inaudibly, across her shoulder:

"And suppose, Ralph—suppose those more tangible grounds exist?"

She heard him sit down heavily, and for some time there was no sound from him except a soft whistle, two or three times repeated.

"Well, and what now?" she asked, turning round on him again defiantly.

She could hardly repress a cry of surprise. She had not expected him to take it like that. His features were always set, but now they seemed to have hardened into stone. She wondered she had never noticed how gray he was about the temples, a grayness that somehow did not seem to be entirely accounted for by the fact that he was ten years her senior. He was making mechanical play with his magnifying glass till she could scarcely resist the impulse to snatch it from his hand and dash it to the ground. And then—only just in time—he broke the silence.

"By Gad, Val, that was playing the game rather low down."

"And I say that you have no right to be so shocked at the idea," she broke in, her voice fierce and shrill by contrast with his quiet intonation. "You admitted yourself that you never troubled to think how things stood between me and Jack Hinton. Why, by a very slight stretch of the imagination, your attitude might be construed into contributory conduct, or whatever it's called."

"Perhaps I didn't care to assert a legal right where the moral one did not go with it."

"I don't know what you mean by that," she said shortly.

"Oh, yes, you do. And if you really don't, it's not worth while explaining. Perhaps, though, you won't mind telling me what is making you bring about the present crisis. As far as I know, there is no reason why—why things should not have gone on as they have been going till now."

"I see. You would have preferred even that to the scandal," she said contemptuously.

"I must own to the average Englishman's distaste for seeing his name dragged through the gutter. But that,

of course, can't be helped now. I'm only wondering why you yourself are so keen on figuring as a headline on the placards of the half-penny rags."

She looked him squarely into the eyes as she replied:

"I thought it was only fair to you, Ralph."

"I'm glad to hear you say so," he remarked dryly. "It's the first decent word that has as yet been said in this sorry business."

"It's fair to you, Ralph," she continued, "because it will set you free to retrieve your first matrimonial blunder. I'm sure you will come across."

"That's very kind and thoughtful of you, but not to the point," he interrupted grimly. "It's quite unnecessary for you to trouble about my future domestic welfare. You'll have quite enough to do to—"

"To trouble about my own, you want to observe," she said quietly, as he stopped short. "Quite so, Ralph. And, therefore, I want you to see that I'm taking some forethought for myself, as well. That's why—I am bringing about this crisis," she said, a sudden vibration in her voice. Her words came slow and difficult, as though dragged up with an effort from the very bottom of her heart. "Ralph, I'm thirty-four. The man who has taken the place you should have kept in my heart is twenty-seven. In a few years I shall be middle-aged, while he will be only just in the first flush of his manhood. I have no fear of his loyalty. But there is no need to put it to any undue strain. Olive, with no doubt unintentional *gaucherie*, has been thrusting herself on him of late. I will admit that Olive has some little share in the crisis."

"In plain words, you are afraid he will fall in love with Olive, or Olive with him, and you wish to avoid undesirable complications."

"You put it crudely, but you can have it your way."

He sat for a few moments, drawing designs on the blotting paper in front of him, and then, to her astonishment, he broke into a loud laugh.

"By Jove, that's what I call the biter bit."

"You are pleased to talk in riddles." "Oh, yes, I may as well tell you—this seems the blessed, if long-overdue, day for explanations. Olive Grier is no more my second cousin than she is my grandmother. I found her in an officers' orphan home, and I thought she would suit my purpose. That's why I brought her here."

"Suited your purpose!" she echoed. "It seems to have required a good deal of stage managing, whatever it was."

"No, no, you'll find it quite simple. I brought the girl here—what do you think for? As an antidote for Hinton; an antidote against you. There were brilliant possibilities in the girl. I wanted her about the house, to bang right up against Hinton every time he came here. I thought that was one way of doing it."

"You really mean what you say?" she asked, with a catch in her breath.

"Of course I do. Only, instead of remedying matters, of which I thought there was still a chance, it seems to have precipitated the catastrophe. Well, it serves me right. I shouldn't have gone in for such back-door methods. I should have put my foot down as soon as things had got beyond the laughing stage, and kicked Hinton out, neck and crop."

"Why didn't you?" she asked, with sudden vehemence.

"Because I know you better than you know yourself. If I had done such a thing, it would have made you more dead set on him still, if that was possible. If I had forbidden him the run of the house, you would have gone to him. There would have been assignments, clandestine meetings in hidden places—all the paraphernalia of a sordid intrigue. I preferred to keep the nuisance on the premises. It didn't make quite so much talk, and if the servants got a little amusement out of it, one need not grudge them it, poor things."

"So it seems you did give some thought to the matter," she said, with a short laugh.

"I don't know exactly where we two parted company," he continued, ignoring the taunt. "I suppose it was the year I got a sudden nausea for the sham and fake and tinsel they call the London season, and I left you to go up to town by yourself. We never seemed to get together again after that. And then came Hinton. I let you run your zigzag course, thinking that, at some turn or other, it would bring you back to your senses—if not to me. A year ago, as a last resource, I went away altogether, with some vague idea of finding out whether there was any allegiance left in you at all. Of course, I only went on the assumption that Hinton was a gentleman."

"He is!" she exclaimed hotly.

"Certainly. I have your word for it," he said, with biting sarcasm. "We all are—all ladies and gentlemen. I suppose that's why we make such a mess of things. Well, now, for a change we'll try being men and women, and act in the ordinary, human sort of way. You want to break away from me."

"I want to taste happiness."

"And you think the two things are synonymous. All right! You must know better than I. Only I presume you are not above taking a piece of advice from me?"

"If it fits in with my plans."

"Precisely. I want to fit in with your plans. I want to make sure that you are not going on a false track."

"What do you mean?"

"Are you quite certain of Hinton?"

The unexpected query left her nonplused.

"My advice to you is—make certain of him. If a woman in your situation falls between two stools she never gets up again. Make certain of him, I tell you."

"I am certain," she flung at him.

"Very well; then we can go ahead. Presumably, you don't propose to defend?"

She looked at him vacantly.

"Oh, I forgot. I don't suppose you understand any of the technicalities. And I don't see why you should be

worried with them. It's Hinton's business. I'd better go and have a talk with him."

"Oh, no, no! I'll arrange everything with him," she said hurriedly.

A derisive smile played about his lips.

"What, afraid there'll be a row? Don't you believe it, my dear. I don't say they don't do these things better abroad. But as we have made our conventions, so we must lie on them. And I don't see how it would make an honest woman of you again if I sent a bullet through his head. Of course, that would be one way of making dead certain of him," he added, with a hoarse laugh, "but it would hardly suit you. So, for the sake of argument, I'll assume that you know what you are talking about. Let's see," he said, wrinkling his brows thoughtfully, "that's all for the present. The rest we had better communicate to each other through our solicitors. I hope you won't mind giving me a day or two before I set the machinery going."

"Take your own time about it," she said.

"Thank you. I can't get up to town just yet. My new case of polyptera wants careful attention. I've just started mounting them. Permit me."

He walked to the door, and held it open for her. She fixed him with a look, in which scorn, surprise, and irresolution blended strangely; and then, with an abrupt gesture of finality, she walked from the room. Back in her own apartments, she rang for her maid.

"My riding habit," she said.

By the time she came down, her groom, according to instructions, was holding her horse ready for her. As she leaped into the saddle, she had a feeling as of secret malevolent eyes fastened upon her. Of course, he was watching her. He knew her errand. No doubt he was glorying in having planted the seed of doubt and distrust in her heart. But he was wrong. Jack Hinton had said he would stand by her—and she knew he would keep his word.

He would stand by her—she sud-

denly caught herself up short at the phrase. It meant all she intended it to mean, and yet there was an ominous ring about it. A tremor shot through her which, presently, to her astonishment, she analyzed as a spasm of anger against her husband. She would have laughed if any one had told her that her husband had still the power of making her angry. Not so much for his insidious attempt to make her doubt Hinton, but for the smug complacency with which he had accepted the present position of things. His horror, his indignation, had rung false. Beneath it all there ran an unmistakable undertone of equanimity, of satisfaction almost, that his wife had gone to the devil.

The thought made her apply the whip with half-conscious fury, and her horse reared, and then plunged forward at a gallop. Very good; she would get there the sooner. Only the aftermath of the storm was left, distant rumblings and faint, sulphurous streaks along the sky. But the soul of it seemed to have got into her body. Her limbs were quick with galvanic quiverings. In her joints she felt a needle-like prickle, and momentarily she expected them to flash forth electric sparks. By the time she reached Hinton Hall her nerves seemed to be strung to the last turn of the screw.

He was down at the front door to meet her. Without an introductory word, she swept past him into the empty dining room, leaving him to follow. When she turned to him, she saw his face was very pale, and, to any construction but her own, shadowed by a tinge of anxiety.

"I have told him, Jack," she burst forth.

"Well?"

"He knows what I want him to do, and he has agreed."

"What you want him to do?" he echoed vaguely.

"To give me my freedom."

He passed his hand across his forehead in token of his perplexity.

"But—but I don't understand. How did you manage that?"

"Jack, there was only one thing to tell him—and I told him."

He smiled at her vacuously, indulgently, just as one might to soothe an overexcited child. Then, as the backwash of his thoughts swept across his brain, a look of horror spread slowly over his face.

"Val, you don't mean me to understand you told him—that?"

"Great God!" she cried, darting toward him. "What else could I have told him that would meet the case? Jack, dear, remember, one can't make omelettes without breaking eggs."

"Yes, but one needn't smash them with a Nasmyth hammer."

She started back from him, with a little gasp of fear. This was something very new and very strange—Jack Hinton practicing repartee on her! Next he would perhaps try his hand with her at epigrams. Her husband's sneer suddenly took to itself a slashing edge. Make sure of Hinton. Very well, she would make sure of him.

"Jack, please understand that you are not bound by any action of mine," she said stridently. "If I've mistaken you—say so like a man. Look what I've had the courage to do—for your sake, as I thought. Pull yourself together, and be straight with me—for my sake."

He turned away from her agonized look of entreaty, and strode up and down the great apartment. Heavens, this was a woman anybody might be proud to have won! And yet—His thoughts were in a mad medley. Sweet, simple fragrances seemed to alternate in him with fierce tropical intoxications, gently persuasive fancies with overwhelming gusts of passion. But through it all he heard her frantic appeal to his manhood. She had dared as much as any woman, and if it was not in a nobler cause, it was his fault, and he must pay the penalty.

"Val—I'll go through it with you," he said, turning to her abruptly.

"You hesitated, you weren't sure," she replied, with a sob.

"Wasn't it better I should first think it over?"

"Oh, yes, much, much better. And you have really thought it over; you are positive it's no false generosity, no mock, makeshift chivalry, but just me—me?"

"Just you, Val."

"Oh, I'm so glad, so glad," she cried, between laughter and tears. "Now I can go back to him with a good heart, and give him the lie in his teeth. He wanted to make me doubt you—doubt you! Oh, you don't know what it would have meant for me to crawl back to him, with shoulders bent for the scorpion lash of his ridicule. I would sooner have faced death."

He did not tell her that that was at times easier than to face life. He thought it better not to tell her anything while that hectic flush came and went on her cheeks.

"But it's all right now," she continued, more steadily. "I'm not a bit afraid any more. Jack, will it be very terrible?"

"Oh, the—— Well, it may be a little unpleasant. There'll be a certain amount of publicity, you know, and people will talk a bit, for a time. But we needn't take any notice of that."

"No, no, we won't. It doesn't really concern anybody; only just you and me, eh?"

"Yes, only just you and me."

"We'll leave it at that, Jack. We must wait for him to begin proceedings, you know," she said, dwelling with almost an air of importance on the legal phrase. "So, for the present, we'd better sit quiet and see what happens."

"Quite so. That's the only thing to do."

"And, Jack," she continued hurriedly, "perhaps you had better not show yourself at the Grange just now. It mightn't be considered good taste, you know."

He looked at her in mute astonishment. There was quite a childish ingenuousness in her words. How unsophisticated she was for a woman of the world!

"You understand, Jack?" she prompted him.

"Oh, yes, I quite understand," he agreed hastily.

"Good-by, then, Jack. I shall let you hear from me."

"That's right. Let me hear from you."

A hurried handshake was their only form of leave-taking. A quarter of an hour later she was back at the house, after a breakneck ride that turned the eyes of the passers-by in her wake with fearful wonder. Lady Magrath was in a hurry; something important must be going on at the Grange. She felt the curiosity she was arousing, and flung it from her, as it were, with an impatient shoulder shrug. How foolish of them to waste their thrills now—they were laying up for themselves an anticlimax when the real sensation came.

A cold feeling of estrangement struck through her as she ascended the stone staircase that led to the massive porch. No wonder! She had lost her right of access, she was entering here as an intruder. She was not in the home she loved, but in a great vastness full of unfamiliar things, and peopled with unwonted presences. She was groping her way along strange side-paths, and stretching out vain, ineffectual arms in search of her lost self.

In a kind of panic, she hurried on to her own room, only to start back with a cry of alarm at the sound which struck her on entering. Even here, in her own sanctuary, she was not allowed to find peace. A half-angry exclamation escaped her, as the next instant she saw Olive Grier stumble to her feet, lifting a tear-stained face.

"Oh, Val, don't be annoyed with me for being here. I was waiting for you. Oh, I'm so glad you're back."

"What's the matter? What's happened?" Lady Magrath asked stiffly.

"Ralph told me I must get ready to go; he's sending me away. What have I done? Have I offended him? And, oh, I was so happy here!"

"Then I don't know what made you so," was the curt reply. "Ralph never took any notice of you, and I—well, I'm not sure that I wasn't sometimes absolutely unkind to you."

The girl looked at her with frightened eyes. Then she burst out:

"But there may have been others."

"Others! Who?"

Olive bit her lips, with evident chagrin at having let the words escape her. An irresistible impulse overtook Lady Magrath to get at the truth, once and for all. There might not be another chance.

"Olive, what has Mr. Hinton said to you?"

"How—how did you know I meant Mr. Hinton?" gasped the girl.

"Don't be absurd. Answer me."

"He has never said anything to me—anything that counted, I mean."

"On your word of honor?"

"On my word of honor. But am I to include the things he looked?"

"Olive, I'm speaking seriously, and I won't have this trifling."

"Val, I assure you I'm not trifling," said the girl, her hands outstretched in pathetic humbleness. "I'm only trying to answer you honestly. Val, sometimes I've noticed a look on him, as if he would tell me things, only there was something that wouldn't let him. We women feel that sort of thing, don't we, Val? At least, Val, you ought to know. I suppose you've had so much more experience than I've——"

"Olive!"

"Oh, forgive me, Val. I didn't mean anything horrid. I only——"

"I've no time for you." Lady Magrath cut her short with an impatient wave of her hand. "What are you making all this fuss about? What do you want me to do?"

"Can't you get Ralph to let me stay a little longer, only till I had got used to the idea of never seeing—him any more?"

"I'm sorry. I can't interfere with my husband's arrangements. I suppose he has made adequate provision for you."

"I don't want his provision."

"That's a matter entirely for yourself, my dear."

She looked after the girl creeping brokenly away, but there was no pity in her heart. The things he had looked

at her, the things he would have told her if there hadn't been something that would not let him! Of course, the girl was speaking what she knew; she was quite old enough to feel the truth. Why, Lady Magrath herself had been only eighteen when she guessed what Sir Ralph meant long before he spoke.

A spirit of bitter vindictiveness entered into her. So Jack Hinton had lied to her, after all! He had given in to her as a favor, as an act of self-sacrifice to the whim of a foolish woman. Very well—then let it be so. She would keep him to it, she would exact her pound of flesh. Let them all suffer—Hinton, Olive, her husband; the sum total of their suffering did not amount to a tithe of hers. She would drag them all into the holocaust she had made of her life. What a come-down it was, to be sure—her great, self-righteous fight for the grandeurs of love ending up in a vendetta of petty spite!

She turned at the sound of the opening door, and, to her surprise, she saw her husband step into the room.

"I hear you've turned little Olive out," she said scornfully. "I suppose you didn't care to let her stay in this tainted atmosphere."

"I'm sending her away because I've no further use for her. A man doesn't like to be reminded of his failures," he answered quietly. "But never mind Olive. There are more important matters to speak about."

"I thought you had left those to our solicitors."

"I couldn't very well leave this one. We have to settle one certain point for ourselves. We had agreed that I should divorce you, hadn't we?"

"As far as I remember."

"Well, I've changed my mind."

She sprang to her feet, her fists clinched.

"A man doesn't break his word!" she cried. "You said you would set me free."

"I have not yet said anything to the contrary. But I've thought the matter over, and I see it in a somewhat different light."

"I don't know what you mean."

"I will tell you. I was thinking of that stewardess."

"That stewardess?" she echoed, looking at him as though she doubted his sanity.

"On the *Urania*, the boat by which I came back," he continued, unperturbed. "I saw her sitting on deck one day with a seedy woman passenger, and recognized her. She caught me watching her, and turned pale. As she hurried past me, she whispered: 'For God's sake, don't give me away; I'd lose the job, and then it'll be the Embankment for me again.'"

"Job—Embankment—you're talking at random."

"No, I'm not. You would know that stewardess' name if I mentioned it to you. It was a name that figured very high up in the social calendar. She threw it all away—just a slight *faux pas*, the thing was rather mismanaged in the courts; and you see, I want to save you from a like blunder."

"For God's sake, don't keep on maundering like that!" she cried, her eyes blazing at him. "Tell me what you mean."

"Just a little patience; we'll get at it presently. I told you to make sure of Hinton. That was a fool's advice. You can't make sure of him, even if you had all the angels in heaven to stand surety for him. But the little I can do to make him safer I'm willing to do."

She had seated herself again, and was staring at him in sullen silence.

"Even admitting that Hinton means well," he went on leisurely, "you must take into consideration the fact you yourself stated—that you are seven years older than he. What will happen? The first couple of years, you will travel abroad, the usual thing. Then you or he, or both of you, will be taken homesick, and you'll sneak back into England, putting on as bold a front as you can. You will find yourselves impossible. You will try to make a circle of your men—derelict men, doubtful women, the flotsam and jetsam left on the strand of society. I've

seen one or two ménages of the sort, and the devil couldn't wish for a happier hunting ground. So far as you are concerned, you'll have to put up with it. There's no hope for you. But I don't know what Hinton will think when he sees the mess he's made of his life, the loss of his proper place, the shattering of his ambitions—I believe he has some—and then the fun will begin between you and him."

"Why do you tell me this?" she gasped, pale to the lips.

"To save you from it," he replied. "Oh, don't be afraid; you'll get your Hinton right enough, only in a more satisfactory way. All I want you to do is to help me to play a little trick on an English jury; it won't be the first time they've been humbugged. We'll change rôles, Valentia. I'll be the blackguard, you'll be the wronged wife. You can leave it to me to manufacture the circumstantial evidence. It won't do me any harm; a man can wriggle so much more easily through the mud. And you—yes, you'll marry your—your lover, and nobody'll be any the wiser."

Her great eyes grew larger and larger as he spoke. Then, as the sense of his words sank into her mind, she cowered back from him.

"And you calmly, deliberately, propose this—conspiracy?" she asked voicelessly.

"After mature reflection, and taking into consideration all the facts of the case. This is surely one of the rare instances where the end justifies the means. And, what's more, I owe it to you. You hinted before that I was, to a certain extent, an accessory to the fact. I'm quite willing to take all the blame, if I can do you any good by it."

"You talk very strangely, Ralph."

"This is a very strange business altogether."

"No, no," she cried vehemently, "you talk as if you cared."

He paused for a moment; then, looking at her fixedly, he said:

"It's too late to go into that now. But I'm not cur enough to play the dog in the manger. Because we can't

both be happy, I'm not going to insist that neither of us should be. Besides—I have my butterflies."

His teeth came together with a snap on the last words, and his head drooped lower and lower on his chest. She, for her part, was gasping for breath. She tried to speak, but for a long time she was capable of nothing but little, gurgling sounds that came and went in her throat. He had turned and was slowly leaving the room, and she could only remain where she was, frozen and petrified and silent. Then a sudden warm wonder, a quick quiver of joy, suffused her from head to foot, and put life and motion and speech back into her being. He had nearly reached the door, when she was upon him with a detaining arm.

"Ralph!"

He stopped, but his back was still toward her.

"You have your butterflies—but you can have me, too, if you still want me," she cried.

He turned full on her, gave her a sharp glance, and then shook his head, with a bitter smile.

She held out her hands in an abandonment of entreaty.

"Ralph, for God's sake, don't say anything till I have spoken! Listen! You believed me when I lied to you—will you believe me when I tell you the truth?"

"If it is the truth," he said quietly.

"It is, by all that's sacred! Ralph, you suggested our playing a trick on the law of the land. Suppose I tell you that I had forestalled you in that—that I meant to do the same?"

"Meant to do the same? I don't understand you," he said bluntly.

"Oh, it's so simple—can't you see? I wanted to be free from you. I knew the conditions which the law of this country required. And, Ralph—I invented them."

He caught her by the wrist, almost as if to steady himself.

"You invented them!" he echoed.

"Yes, Ralph."

"Val! And you say that is the truth—the real truth?"

"As much as the other is the only falsehood I ever told you in my life," she replied solemnly. And then her voice fell to a low whimper. "Ralph, I felt I had nothing more to lose when I lost your love, or thought I did. Nothing else counted—neither truth, nor honor, nor life itself. And, blind fool that I was, I had it all the time—all the time, didn't I, Ralph?" she cried, her grasp tightening convulsively on his arm.

"Yes, Val, all the time. I think I proved it to you."

"Oh, you did—splendidly—gloriously!"

He eyed her hungrily. Then he cried, the terror of a dread retrospect in his tone:

"Val, Val! What made you play with fire like that?"

"I don't know, Ralph," she replied simply. "I suppose it was the storm. It got into my veins and drove me mad."

"Yes, the storm, dear." He took her gently by the hand, and she followed meekly as he guided her to the window. "It was a great storm, Val, a great storm."

"It has cleared the air, Ralph."

So they stood for a while, gazing out into the rosy serenity of the sunset.

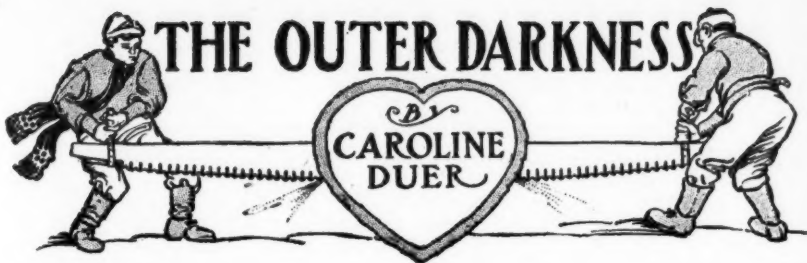
"Ralph," she said presently, "there's a poor little butterfly you tried to break on the wheel this afternoon."

He pondered for an instant, and then comprehension flashed on him.

"Oh, yes, I know—Olive," he said.

"Let the first act of our new life be to bring balm to others. Thank God, I am healed myself!"





BRILLIANT moon peered down through the high pine trees of the Adirondack forest, and pointed supercilious, white fingers at the rusty embers of our spent fire. Bascomb and I had gone into rough camp, and left such comforts as kitchen-cooked meals and Christian beds behind us, together with birch-and-cedar-trimmed rooms, lantern-lighted verandas, and all the elaborate rusticity of modern lake life.

The shooting season had not yet opened, and our two days' trail over the mountain to the particular place where there might, or might not, be good fishing, was of no especial difficulty or interest; neither did it at any point reward us with a better view than those we had enjoyed several times already from other high places. It was just for the want of something to do that we had made up our minds to do this; at least, that Bascomb had made up his mind. For mine, if the truth had been told, leaned toward remaining in the vicinity of the spot we had left, where Bascomb's Cousin Rita—the loveliest lady who ever bared red-gold hair to the yellow-gold sunshine against a bright blue sky, and made jerseys and short skirts appear like unto the garments of goddesses flashing through the green gloom—where Rita Harrison held high court and carnival.

However, Bascomb is one of those men whom no other man feels it easy to withstand; and so, in spite of all the

secret desires of my heart, I found myself embarked upon the expedition exactly as he proposed it, and experiencing a certain peaceful elation at the prospect of the pipe of contemplation smoked at the end of a well-tramped day. I lay on my back, with my arms beneath my head, staring up at the shields of silver space between the branches, and was vexed when our guide broke the delicious stillness with a clatter of goodness-knows-what-kind of crockery or tinware he was piling up to wash in the brook. The noise seemed to rouse Bascomb, also, out of a brown study, in which he'd been indulging, seated bolt upright, with his hands locked round his knees. He stretched himself, and looked over at me for a moment. Then he called to the man:

"I say, Danby, what's become of Heyden? Where is he this summer?"

Danby poised his pile of plates a little more securely, hesitated, and then turned to face us, with evident reluctance.

"Disappeared, sir," he answered shortly. "Gone to the devil, I guess." After which he went crashing off through the bushes, as if to put an end to any further questioning.

Bascomb's eyes followed him for a moment, and then came back to meet mine.

"He was the best guide in the country, that Heyden, and one of the nicest men I ever met," he said. "I know his story—I'm the only person in the world who does, I suspect—and I'm going to tell it to you."

"For why because?" I inquired,

turning lazily on my side, and quoting the immortal sentence of a German tutor at one time the tormented instructor of both of us.

"For the reason that I expect to dream of the poor chap all night," said Bascomb, "and it won't do you any harm to dream of him, too. He was with the family at Cedar Point last summer," he went on, with a backward nod of his head, to indicate the direction where the household we had left might, imaginatively, be supposed to lie quiescent under the high moon. "I saw quite a lot of him. Splendid-looking fellow; tall, well set up; steel-gray eye that met yours square as a die; sort of hawk face and black hair. A bit more reserved and taciturn than some of those fellows get to be. Answering questions and telling yarns, as they have to all along in the day's work, limbers most of their tongues a lot, and no wonder. But Heyden did not talk till he got to know you pretty well, and then not very much.

"When Rita first put up that camp—it's hers, you know; she built it with the money that old Canadian general she was engaged to left her, and my aunt always declares she's a guest there. Well, when the camp was being built, Heyden was one of the men employed. They do a little of everything, these guides; hunting, fishing, lumbering, carpentering, there's nothing they can't turn their hands to. But Heyden wanted to specialize. The man he worked under had become a regular architect of sorts by studying in the correspondence school, and he, having a natural taste that way also, was able to do the same thing.

"Of course, he was supporting life otherwise, meanwhile. He had a place every summer as guide to two old maiden ladies who were bringing up a lot of delicate nephews and nieces over at Osgood Lake. But Rita took a fancy to him, offered him twice what he was getting, and, when he would not leave the old ladies in the lurch, she went over and told them the story, and got them to insist upon giving him up. For his own good, poor devil!

"Naturally, he was grateful. He thought the sun rose and sank for Rita, and he'd have set the stars in lanterns to festoon her balcony railing, and considered them none too good for her. He ran her camp, and her launch, and her picnics and expeditions generally, with a kind of smooth perfection that you wouldn't have noticed—it was all so quiet—till you came to study it. At first, he just worshiped her from a long way off, content that she should be better settled and better served than any other woman on the lakeside. But, gradually—can you wonder at it?—being constantly with her, handsome as she is, and friendly as she chose to be to him; in the most romantic surroundings; canoeing, tramping; off for two or three day trips where she always shone out, the triumphant wood nymph of the party; in the freedom of an intercourse where her comfort, and well-being, even her safety, often depended upon his strength and foresight; gradually, as I say, he fell absolutely and violently in love with her.

"He was so proud of her walks and climbs, of her endurance, her untiring energy, the skill with which she handled her canoe or her sailboat, her quick eye, her angler's cunning, above all the gallant air of ease with which she did everything she attempted, that his face actually seemed to beam out light whenever he looked at her. As far as mere man and woman were concerned, he was her equal. In splendid health, in pride of bearing, in physical beauty, even. And in a sort of fine simplicity and unconsciousness of self, he was very much her superior."

Bascomb carefully avoided looking at me as he made this last statement; and, aware of the protest I was about to make, he hastily went on.

"Heyden's manners were quite dignified and direct, and his speech good. He'd evidently been a reader and dreamer. Self-educated through the long winter nights, I suppose, by sheer force of desire to escape from his surroundings. And, of course, Rita stepped into the middle of it all, and

became the statue, warmed to life, of every ideal he'd ever had. I saw it in a thousand little ways before I believed it. Somehow, you'd never think of a thing like that *really* happening; especially not with a woman who's related to you. It was a bit of a shock!

"And yet, when I sat back and thought, it seemed natural enough on his part. It was perfectly hopeless, and respectful, romantic, and beautiful, as he conceived it. Something to be hidden forever, except when a bubble from the inner spring flashed up into his eyes from the eternal depths below—the secret force of all the currents of his being from this time forth. Something, for the memory of which he was going to accomplish wonders, and dedicate them to her.

"Of course, Rita never saw it. That is, she never saw it as anything but a sort of becoming, doglike devotion on the part of a semi-savage whom she had befriended. And his admiration was only what she had been accustomed to find in every man, gentle or simple, who looked at her. She never would have seen anything more, either, if I hadn't been a fool of the first water.

"It happened one night that we had gone out, she and I, in her canoe, to judge of a new effect of colored lanterns strung along the edge of the boathouse. She was very anxious that no other camp should look more like a Japanese festival among the trees than hers did, and was always inventing new combinations and clusters of her hundred white, red, and green lights. This turned out to be a particularly successful effort, and as we paddled back to the dock she sprang from the canoe with more enthusiasm than she usually puts into her perfectly poised movements. I suppose she lost her balance, or her foot slipped on the wet wood of the planks; anyhow, she missed the platform altogether and plunged into the lake. She could swim like a fish, so I wasn't much alarmed, though the water was deep enough just there. But, of course, I was going after her, and I'd already got my coat off,

when Heyden, who'd come down to meet us, caught me by the shoulders, flung me behind him, and jumped in himself.

"It didn't take a minute for him to bring her in. She could have brought herself in, for that matter, in spite of her long skirts. But the expression of his face, the fury at me, the passionate terror and tenderness for her, were perfectly unmistakable. I suppose he didn't know her prowess in the water, for he was as white as paper with the fear that was past when he got her to the landing. She was laughing. Any sudden emergency like that, which calls upon her utmost reserve force, delights her, and she went up the steps as gay as possible, with her golden hair tangled about her face and her soaked white dress trailing little silver rivulets behind her, graceful and glistening, like some wonderful mermaid.

"That was rather fun," she called back to me.

"And he stood below, in the shadow, saying, between pants: 'My God, my God, my God!' over and over again to himself, hoarsely. It sounded horrible.

"So the next day I remonstrated. We were going off, as it happened, into rough camp; she, and a girl who was stopping there, and the girl's brother, and I, and Heyden, of course. And I told her enough to put her on her guard, I thought, and keep her from being more with him than was necessary. As a general rule, she let him pick her way for her and constitute himself her special guardian over the difficult places. Of course, I laid great stress upon the idealistic reverence of his regard, but I put it to her pretty strongly that it was rather the deuce of a position all round, hideously hard on him, too—and must be carefully dealt with.

"She listened with that inscrutable feminine set of the features, which means they hear what you say and aren't going to let you guess how much importance they attach to it; and then she nodded and thanked me, and said she would be on the lookout in future. It seemed impossible to her, she de-

clared, she had never noticed anything of the kind; but she had great confidence in my judgment, and would act accordingly.

"Well, as it turned out, no action on her part was necessary. Perhaps Heyden was afraid he'd come too near betraying himself—of course he'd apologized to me, with all befitting excuses—perhaps he didn't trust himself near her. Anyhow, he devoted his entire energy to piloting the other girl, who was a tenderfoot of the tenderest kind and needed all the help every one could give her. On the rare occasions when he left her to me—and I wished he hadn't—he was busy with the pack basket, or the fire, or the pitching of the shelter tents. He never went to Rita, except for orders.

"And when—quite contrary to the conduct I should have advised her pursuing—she asked him, the second night out, to take her down the brook-side to a little pool she saw shining in the distance, he answered very decidedly that 'the walk was all over sharp rocks and fallen tree trunks, and too rough for her after a hard day's climb.' I saw her look at him curiously, and then at me, as if she were weighing his unusual opposition to her wishes, and wondering what relation it bore to the secret state of his mind as I had revealed it to her.

"*'I think I can manage it,'* she said, in that high, cool way she has, *'and if you are tired, Heyden, one of the gentlemen will go with me. I want to see if the pool would make a good bathing place for to-morrow morning.'*

"He flushed, threw down whatever he had in his hand at the moment, and went with her at once. Like Tobit's dog, I went with them. I don't think they exchanged a word, but he tore down the branches before her, and kicked aside dead logs, and trampled down charred wood and underbrush with more than ordinary vigor, while the hand he held up to help her in the places where scrambling appeared a necessity seemed to me to tremble. We agreed that the pool was admirably suited to swimming purposes.

"Rita and the girl sat themselves down at what was left of our cooking fire, pushing the ends of stick about with their toes, and pretending to be useful, and we men went off to settle the shelters more securely. When I sauntered back again, the two women were talking so earnestly that they did not heed me, and I heard Rita say, apparently in answer to some comment from her companion:

"*'So he is devoted to me. I pay him for that. But I'm told he's gone farther, and fallen in love with me! Yes, my dear! Dared to fall in love with me, like a real man! Did you ever hear anything so quaint? He seems to be suppressing himself nobly, but now that I've discovered it, I mean to make him speak. I'm terribly curious to hear what he'll say. I've had all sorts of masculine hearts declaring they were on fire for me—but never a guide's. It ought to be rather an amusing experience. I suppose I shall have to dismiss him afterward; but the season is practically over, so it doesn't matter so much.'*

"There was the sound of a suppressed exclamation behind me as she finished, and I saw Heyden, almost at my elbow. I don't know what our eyes said to each other in the first second of encounter. I shut mine, not to see him in such a moment of humiliation and outraged feeling. When I opened them again he was gone."

Bascomb ignored a movement on my part to interrupt him, and continued:

"I suppose that girl slept well that night, and I know her brother did—heavily—but I didn't. I tossed and twisted, and thought hot thoughts about the miserable, petty vanity and meanness of women in general, and the sort of vulgar cruelty and light-mindedness of Rita in particular. Her utter misunderstanding of the high feeling she'd roused in the man, and her acceptance of the commoner situation as something she could stoop to trifle with, however daintily, at the tips of apparently shocked fingers. I was disgusted, and disgust is a poor smoother of the softest pillow, let alone a pine

one. So I got up at last and stood in the door of the tent, to stretch myself.

"I saw Heyden coming up the slope from below the camping ground, and I saw Rita moving across the moonlight space in front of her shelter. She called to him, and he stopped as short as if he'd been shot. I leaned forward there in the darkness, and listened with all my ears. She asked him to make up the fire again, and she drew the great blue cloak she wore closer round her, and seemed to shiver. She hoped she hadn't taken cold. But she wasn't cold. Not she! I could almost see the glow in her cheeks and the brightness of her eyes.

"'Heyden,' she said graciously, 'I don't believe there's a better guide or a finer man than you in all the Adirondacks. I'm very lucky to have got you to take care of me. I hope you know how much I appreciate the way you do it.'

"He didn't answer, and she evidently took his silence for embarrassment, for she began to speak again directly, in an even softer tone.

"'I've fancied—you must not mind my noticing it—that you have been troubled lately, since we came on this expedition; and if there is anything that can be done to help you, I want to do it. Only tell me.'

"He looked up at her, kneeling as he was on one knee by the fire, and upon my word I never saw a finer figure of a man.

"'I should like, if you please, to leave your service,' he said.

Rita put on an expression of hurt surprise. She had no doubt that his despair would break from him in answer to her next question, and her head went up in anticipated triumph. She looked as superb as he.

"'You want to leave me?' she said. 'Why, Heyden, what has happened? What reason can you have for deserting me like this?'

"I held my breath. Would he tell her?

"'I hope you won't call it deserting you, Miss Harrison. I've been very grateful for all you've done, but—'

"He stopped at that, and she tried to help him on.

"'But what? I want to be very kind, Heyden, as kind as I'm handsome; and they say I'm very handsome, don't they? Go on. But what?'

"'But I've got the most beautiful woman in the world for my wife at home, and I'm just wearying to get back to her,' he burst out, with sudden passion.

"Rita gave a sort of stumble, as if her foot had caught in a root or stone, and her cloak drooped from one shoulder rather forlornly, as she turned away, but she commanded her voice wonderfully. The strain hardly made itself heard.

"'Certainly you shall go,' she said, 'as soon as you please. At once, if you prefer it.'

"He was gone the next morning when such of us as had been asleep waked up, and the underguide, whom he had sent up in his place, conveyed us home.

"I took some trouble," Bascomb added slowly; "I took some trouble to pursue that man to his hole. I felt I owed him the handclasp of friendship, and comprehension, of apology, of admiration, of everything one could put into a handclasp, and more.

"It was the poorest sort of a cottage, well beyond the outskirts of the poorest sort of a village, a good day's journey away. And when I got there I didn't try to see him."

"Nor his wife, either?" asked I facetiously.

"Yes," said Bascomb, "I did see his wife. And that's why I didn't want to look him in the face. His wife was a vixen, a confirmed drunkard, a red-featured fury, who was the terror of all the children of the village."

There was silence between us for a moment. I considered whether it might not, on the whole, be better for me *not* to go back to civilization, and the spell of petticoats yet a while. I felt disgusted, even as Bascomb had been disgusted.

"I suppose if Rita had left that poor

devil his one golden drop—not of hope; but of faith in his ideal, belief in service offered to it—he'd have worked out his small ambitions somehow, for the sake of it, and been, in a way, happy," remarked Bascomb, breaking the stillness. "But when she poisoned that drop she just poisoned him, and he's done for."

Here Bascomb got up, and made a move toward his tent.

"I'd like to have him canonized, though, for stabbing her conceit with that one splendid lie," he suddenly shouted over his shoulder.

"Amen!" said I. But I said it under my breath, for the glamour of Rit faded slowly.



CUPID'S CALL

FELLER named Cupid come to call last night.

Pudgy little chap with a face so bright
Sort of made me feel that the Sun and Stars
All of 'em had come from the land of Mars
Down to stay at my house for a little time,
Settin' all the jangles of my life in chime.

Cheeky little feller, is that little fat mouse!

Sort of took possession of the whole blamed house.
Went around a-snoopin', and a-peakin' all about,
Like as if he owned it past the shadder of a doubt.
Didn't seem to be a spot on the bloomin' place
Where the little visitor didn't show his face.

Funny thing 'at happened when he first came by.
House was darker 'n a coal 'gainst a midnight sky.

Pitchy black was everything, and the heavy air
Seemed a foggy substance, a-sizzlin' with care;
But the very minute Mr. Cupid hove in sight—
Bang! The whole contraption was a blaze of golden light!

Queerest thing you ever knew happened after that.

Him and me went strollin' for to have a little chat.
Went down through the garden where the flowers all was dead,
Walked about the orchard with the stark limbs overhead.
'N'en there come a poppin', and a singin', in the air,
And the place was roses and young blossoms everywhere!

He's a kind of wizard; that's the truth of it, I guess.
Turnin' darkness into day, woe to happiness.

Don't know how he does it, but if he should cast his eye
On a hopeless punkin it would blossom into pie.
Mighty glad he's come along, with his archery.
If he wants a target he can shoot

At
Me!

CARLYLE



RECKON it all sounds pretty ridiculous to grown folks when a lady aged six breaks off an engagement with a gentleman of seven, and clinches it by kickin'

the kitchen stove clean through the parlor and into the horse trough, now don't it? But there's a heap of grown folks whose busted hearts is easier healed than kids, now you mark me. Anyway, that's what Jim Slater tells Lem Rogers when Lem gets to laughin' about it, and Jim ain't foolin', either.

"Tain't the things you done when you're a kid that makes you feel foolish when you're rememberin' things to yourself," says Jim. "It's the things you done a long time since then, that makes you get red in the face and squirm a heap, and the sweat come out on you, and you wish, by golly, you'd never done 'em, them times you sits all by yourself in the dark thataway and takes the back trail, mental. And what's more," he says, "you apologize to Tommy right now, Lem Rogers, or there'll be things for you to think of that's happenin' while you waits." And doggoned if Jim don't stand there a-lookin' at Lem thataway till Lem gets up and does it, too, handsome.

You see, this here Tommy boy comes out to Idaho with his maw so he ketches up on his health a piece. And Marie, she comes down from the Park with her maw and a lot of other folks on

their way back East, and Tommy and Marie they falls in love, reg'lar, same as grown folks. Tommy's little, and thin, and white, and quiet, and so awful grave thataway you got respects for him, like he's some one you don't know well yet. But that Marie! Excuse me! If there's ever a limb, and a lump, and a handful rolled into one it's Marie, with her a-tossin' back her curly yeller hair, and a-stampin' her little foot, and a-lookin' at you with them big, snappy eyes like you ain't even folks if you happens, accidental, of course, to step on a piece of the house they builds in front the corral to get married in.

But for all they're so different they gets along fine, account maybe Marie does all the bossin', and it looks like they makes a dry crossin' sure enough, when all of a sudden there's trouble in the family, which is caused by that Mrs. Hooker's bull calf of a Percy. This doggone Percy never pays no attention whatever to 'em till he drives him away from the bunk house, where he's been bulgin' around a couple days a-cuttin' things up with a new jackknife, and changin' buckles when we ain't lookin', and a-messin' round generally; and then, by golly, he makes a awful snoot toward Jim, impident, and goes a-swaggerin' over to where them kids is a-keepin' house all peaceful.

"And I'm sorry to see it," says Jim, as he watches him a-struttin' on over. "I ain't worryin' nothin' over Marie, account she takes care of herself, am-

ple; but Tommy's a gentleman, and a sure enough gentle gentleman better stay in the house these days and read in a book, else there's trouble," he says.

And sure enough, next mornin' Tommy comes a-walkin' over to where we're greasin' saddles and asks Jim, who's the range boss, if he spares one of us fellers a half hour, so we goes with him down to the river and shows him the best place to get drowned in. And Jim looks at us fellers, and we looks at him a minute, and then Jim says to him, kindly like:

"You got your permit all O. K., I reckon, ain't you?" he asks him.

"No, sir, Mr. Jim; I ain't got no permit," quavers Tommy, anxious. And at that Jim shakes his head dubious.

"Then I'm sorry," says he, "but Mr. Gordon left instructions, special, we wasn't to let nobody drown themselves in our river less'n they has written permission from him, in every case. And while I strains a point to oblige a friend in trouble, which looks urgent," he says, "why, orders is orders, as you sees for yourself, and I reckon you'll have to wait till Mr. Gordon gets back."

"But I can't wait, Mr. Jim," and his lips quivers. "I just can't. Will you lend me your pistol a minute, please?" And that's where Lem laughs, and Jim makes him apologize.

"I sees folks afore now," he says, lookin' at Lem meanin', "'t I lends it to, gladly, and hangs up a prize for accurate shootin' into the bargain." And with that he takes his gun out the saddle holster like he's tickled to death to help Tommy out at last, and then of a sudden he throws it on the ground like he's the most disappointed feller you ever sees.

"Doggone it all!" says he. "I knowed there's somethin' I forgets up to Soda yesterday. Either you fellers got a ca'tridge?" he says to me'n Lem.

Well, we looks at Jim a minute, and he looks at us, and then I says I ain't, and Lem says he ain't, and Jim he throws up his hands like it's the most disgustin' thing he ever hears of.

"I declare for it!" says he, feelin'. "It's the most embarrassin' position I

finds myself in since the time I puts my pants on wrong-side-to when I'm a kid. You sees how it is," he says, turnin' to Tommy. "It sure looks like you has a hard run of luck this mornin'. I reckon Mr. Gordon frets himself sick over it when he gets back; and I'm feelin' that bad it's tur'ble, which, of course, don't help now. Look here," says Jim, brightenin' up, "suppose you tells us what the trouble is, anyway, and maybe we offers a suggestion some way or other."

But Tommy shakes his head, heart-broke. "Thank you, Mr. Jim," says he, "but I don't think you could. Gen'als has to be big and strong, and I ain't," he says. "If I could only die now and begin all over again, maybe I'd be different when I comes back."

"Who says gen'als has to be big and strong, I'd like to know?" demands Jim, like it's the most foolish thing he ever hears of.

And then it all comes out 't that nasty Percy goes over there and gets to foolin' round Marie, and tells her how his paw is a gen'al, and he's a-goin' to be a gen'al when he grows up; and Marie she's very fond of gen'als, indeed, and breaks her engagement with Tommy short off account he's never a-goin' to be big and strong enough to be one. And then when Tommy asks her for a little time to see if he don't get bigger, why she flies off into a fit and kicks over the kitchen, and then walks away with that dog-gone Percy, sayin' she ain't a-goin' to waste her whole life a-waitin' for no man.

"Why, heavens above!" snorts Jim, when Tommy's above. "Folks that ain't so big makes the finest kind of gen'als. You let a great big feller go to the President of these here United States and ask to be a gen'al, and what does the President say to him? 'Son,' he says to him, a-wavin' his hand tired-like, 'you're too big. Too big by half. Gen'als has to get out of lots of tight places, and through loopholes. You'd look pretty stuck fast halfway through a loophole, with an enemy behind a-proddin' you good with

a bay'nit, now wouldn't you? You won't do,' says he. 'Send in the smallest feller you can find. I'd be a gen'ral myself if I wasn't so doggoned big,' says he. And with that, in comes a snappy little bit of a feller and gets the job to once. Sure he does.

"And this little gen'ral he comes out of his tent some fine mornin' after breakfast, and over on the next hill he sees another gen'ral, with twice as many men as he's got. And what does he do? Does he sit still while that other gen'ral sends over a dray and takes him pris'ner? Not much he don't. 'Men,' says he, a-throwin' away his toothpick. 'I'm in a mighty tight place, but thank Heaven I'm little,' he says, a-drawin' up his belt till he ain't no bigger'n your wrist. 'Gimme liberty or gimme death!' says he. 'And watch me!' And with that he wriggles out of that tight place, and sneaks through a loophole he notices a little farther on down, and, by golly, he takes that other gen'ral pris'ner afore he's quit feelin' round himself for his gun. He does, for a fact."

Well, sir, when Jim's through, Tommy's a-standin' there with his eyes bugged out big as a horse's. And his cheeks is red, and it seems like he hardly controls himself so he breathes.

"And then does she marry him?" he asked, awedlike. "His ladylove, I mean," he says.

And with that Jim begins to swallow like he's a chicken a-workin' on that last kernel of corn. It's easy seen he ain't prepared for no such question, but in a minute he controls himself with a effort, and goes on.

"Marry him!" says he. "I should surely say she does. Why, he ain't more'n took that other gen'ral pris'ner before this lady I'm a-tellin' you of comes by on a white horse, and the first you knows she's off'en that horse, and is leanin' up against the little gen'ral like he's a sod house."

"Oh, gen'ral!" says she. 'Forgive my ever sayin' you're little account you ain't so big physical. Turn this big gen'ral over on his back so he can't get away none till your men gets here,

and let's you'nd I go get married to once,' says she. And they does so."

"And, oh, Mr. Jim!" says Tommy, all excited, when Jim's through. "Can I be a gen'ral? And can I begin bein' one right now?"

"Sure," says Jim. "That's what I'm a-drivin' at. The earlier you ketches gen'rals and sets 'em to work the better off everybody is. I'm sorry we never thinks of it before."

"But, Mr. Jim," says Tommy, "I can't go to where the President is so he gives me the job. What can I do about that?"

"Do?" says Jim. "Ain't I the range boss here, same as he is back East? Stand up straight," says he; and Tommy stiffens himself like he's a spring. "Bring your hand up, so," says Jim, a-puttin' his hand to his eye, and Tommy does so. "Know all men, and women special, by these here presents," says Jim, sober, "that Thomas Touchard is a gen'ral from now on, henceforth, and forever, till death does its part. Wigglum squigglum, gimme the grip," says he, and he reaches out and shakes Tommy's hand, grave.

And old Tommy's eyes is just a-shinin', and he's shakin' like a leaf. "Have I got to have a sword, Mr. Jim?" says he.

"To once," says Jim, and he goes back into the bunk house and rummages round in his old box, and comes out in a minute with a little old sure-enough sword. He does for a fact! And what you reckon? I'm doggoned if that sword ain't one Jim's kid brother has years and years ago, and Jim's been a-packin' it round ever since, surreptitious. And Jim, his hand is a-shakin's he hands it to Tommy, and he looks at us savage.

"And soldiers?" asks Tommy.

"Stand up, men," says Jim to us, sharp. "And for Heaven's sake hurry up and get it over," he says to us, under his breath, so Tommy don't hear. "The First Regiment, gen'ral," says Jim, after we're a-standin' up. "Do as I do, and salute," says he, and all three of us raises our hands to our right eye and brings 'em down again, stiff. "The

first drill's right after chores is done," says Jim to Tommy.

But Tommy don't go just yet. He stands there a-lookin' at Jim like Jim's just the grandest feller 't ever lives. Then in a minute he sort of tiptoes up to him, timid, and puts his hand on Jim's knee, softlike.

"Mr. Jim," says he, "I think you're just—you're just beautiful!"

And Jim he wipes the sweat off'en his face, and says he ain't, either, and for Tommy to hurry off and come back after chores. And when Tommy's gone Jim turns to us fellers savage again. "Great goodness alive!" says he. "You fellers goin' to loaf round here all day? What you reckon you're drawin' wages for, anyway? Get out of here and hustle!" And with that, he goes into the bunk house and slams the door awful, and we don't see him no more till after the chores is all done.

Well, anyway, Tommy comes over after chores is done, and us fellers gets our rifles, and then we all goes out behind the colt sheds and has drill. And don't you know that little rooster drills us twice a day from then on for three days. He does for a fact! We-alls don't know much to do, but what we does know, such as "forward march," and "halt," and markin' time, why we comes out on particular strong, and at the end of them three days Lem says he reckons we're the best-drilled regiment in Idaho. And I thinks so myself. And when we ain't drillin', by golly, old Tommy's a-rammin' round with us fellers until it does you good to see the way he's busyin' about, like he's sure-enough gettin' to be like other kids.

And then comes the fateful day when Tommy decides he's a-goin' to march us up round the house, so's the folks sees how he's a sure-enough gen'ral now. And then Lem allows he's took sick sudden; and I don't want to do it no more'n he does, and says I feels like I'm a-gettin' water on the knee; and Jim, he stands there a-lookin' at Tommy like somethin's happened he's been lookin' for, but didn't expect.

"Gen'ral," he says, after a minute,

"does you still feel thataway toward Marie?"

"Yes, sir, Mr. Jim," declares Tommy plaintive. "It seems like I love her all the harder now 't she don't love me." And he looks at us fellers wistful.

"Good enough!" says Jim, grim. "We makes this here demonstration in force you speaks of gladly. And the gen'ral expects every man to do his duty," he says, convincin'. "Any invalids and cripples in this here regiment will now go somewheres and lie down," he says, lookin' at me'n Lem meanin'. "But if any of 'em does, I hereby hints to 'em I ain't no invalid myself," he says. And he doubles up his arm, suggestive, till it most busts his shirt open.

Well, of course, Jim's speakin' of duty thataway puts a new light on things, and Lem says he's feelin' a heap better, and I says the swellin' in my knee seems to be goin' down fast now, and Tommy gives out his orders and we marches out around them sheds and shows up in front the house like they ain't nothin' we likes better'n drillin' before folks. And then Marie and Percy comes a-runnin' up and stands there a-lookin' at us like we're George Washington bein' the father of his country. And the folks they all comes a-runnin' out and stands there noddin' to each other, and smilin', pleased.

For a full minute, I reckon, old Tommy stands there in front of us, rigid, his eyes a-shiftn' to Marie and back to us. And then he waves his sword, graceful, and we begins to drill.

Heavens, how we drills! It's forward march, and halt, and mark time, and forward march again, till I reckon they wonders how folks like us ever does it without missin' a order. Then as we streams past the folks a-standin' there, they claps their hands and cheers, lusty. And Marie she runs in a little closter, and is a-lookin' at Tommy thataway, only more so, until there's no tellin' what would've happened just then, if somethin' else didn't.

You see we're way past the grown folks by now, and I reckon Tommy figgers he leads us back by 'em again so

they cheers us some more, and Marie realizes fully just how things is. But the trouble is there ain't no orders for soldiers to go back, nohow. They always keeps on a-goin' the same way, as anybody whoever pays fifty cents to sit on the stand and watch 'em go by down to Ogden last Fourth of July knows. So the more Tommy says forward march, the farther away we gets, of course, and finally he gets desperate and makes up a order. "Backward march!" says he, and with that we starts marchin' backwards.

But you let me tell you somethin'. It ain't so easy. In the first place, legs is so contrived they only goes one way, orderly, which if you ever notices the way your knees is hinged some night when you're a-goin' to bed you grasps ready. And, in the second place, dogs grabs you from behind. And there you are in a nutshell. We're a-staggerin' along the best we can, bumpin' into each other dreadful, with Jim a-swearin' under his breath somethin' shockin', when all of a sudden, old Nig comes a-runnin' out from the house, and most likely noticin' the way the folks is lookin', his attention is drawn to us to once.

Now I ain't sayin' nothin' against Nig, you understand, account ordinarily the last thing Nig thinks of is bitin' his friends. Usual it's just the other way round, and he helps you out a considerable, if he can, by bitin' the other feller. And don't you know, I often wonders since, whether Nig don't recognize us fellers account we're a-wobblin' round thataway, or whether maybe he gets it sized up our feet's misbehavin' and he starts 'em forwards all reg'lar again by givin' 'em a nip. Anyway, he comes a-runnin' over and bites Lem on the heel, prompt.

And, gentlemen, hush! The way Lem goes back over that dog, and grabs me in goin' so he saves himself, and I grabs Jim so I saves myself from bein' pulled down by Lem, and we all three goes down together, don't leave nothin' to be desired if you're there to see it. I reckon it's about the worst crumpled up regiment you ever hears of. And, of

course, we're mad then, and gets up hasty and goes to chasin' that Nig, tryin' to paste him with our hats, and stones, and things, with him a-thinkin' it's a joke and carryin' on high, until, by golly, when old Nig runs off complete, and we goes back to where Tommy's a-standin' all white and stiff, we feels pretty undignified and moist, I assures you. And that ain't the worst, account the folks is all a-laughin' immoderate, and that nasty Percy is a-standin' there with a snoot all made up.

"Yah!" he sings out. "You're a pretty lot of soldiers, you are! Look at the old clothes for uniforms!" he says to Marie, mockin'. "Yah!" he shouts. "You wait till my father comes here tomorrow, and he'll lick the whole caboodle of you with one hand tied behind him!" And with that, he takes Marie by the hand and they goes back to their housekeepin', disdainful.

Say, you want to know how we feels? I ain't a-goin' to tell you account I can't. Nobody can't, less'n they're what you calls linguists. But I tells you how we gets away from there, freely. We turns around! That's what we does! We turns around, and we marches back past them folks like they ain't only not there, but nowheres else. And Tommy's face is white as so much wool, and when we gets back of the colt sheds all safe again, I'm doggoned if that little feller don't break down and cry like the dickens.

Well, sir; it's pretty bad, of course, account we knows 'tain't cause he's hurt, physical, but account his heart is broke over again, and we feels dreadful. So we starts a little row amongst ourselves, so his attention is drawn to us, and by the time he gets us straightened out, he's quit cryin'.

"But how *does* soldiers get back after they're away off somewheres?" asks Tommy, a-wipin' off his face, and straightenin' himself up, manful.

Well, nobody can't answer that, of course, account there ain't no *right* answer to it. So we sits a while like we're thinkin', and finally Lem has a try at it, anyway.

"I ain't so sure," says he, "and I

don't want to go on record as sayin' it, account it's a long time ago I reads of it in a paper, but if the paper's right, and I remembers right, why then, they sends carriages for 'em."

But Tommy only shakes his head, dismal, at that, and asks Jim to tell him.

"Dogged if I knows," says Jim, desperate. "There must be some way of gettin' 'em back, of course, but whether they has sure-enough orders for it, or whether they just tells 'em to go on home, I don't know. Anyway," he says, "we fixes that easy, next time, account we just keeps on a-goin'."

"Yes, sir, Mr. Jim," says Tommy. "But how about uniforms?"

"No good," says Jim, lookin' at us fellers out the tails of his eyes. "Excuse me!"

"They looks nice," says Tommy. "Ladies likes 'em."

But Jim says no, decided. "I don't want to throw cold water on no ideas of your'n, gen'ral," he says, "but that Percy don't know what he's talkin' about, if his paw is a gen'ral. Uniforms is out of style long ago. When you gets a little older you reads about it in a book Mr. Webster has out here two years ago, called 'The Takin' of Lungtungpen.' It's wrote when the styles is just changin', and the soldiers is anxious, natural."

"How about uniforms?" says they, when the gen'ral tells 'em to go take this place pris'ner.

"Uniforms!" snorts this here gen'ral. "Heavens above, men!" says he. "You all knows uniforms is out of style. Even the women ain't crazy over 'em no more. Take 'em off!" says he, and they done so. "Now begone," says he, "and come back without your skins or in 'em," he says, grim. And they done so, and that's the way they comes back, too."

"How?" says Tommy.

"In 'em," says Jim. "But the point is here: Uniforms don't help none in doin' the work, and you wins women's smiles without 'em, as you understands thoroughly when you reads the book. Gen'ral," goes on Jim, impressive, "we

rub out this day's tur'ble disaster only by sure-enough *doin'* somethin', and it must be swift and sure. No dallyin' with looks helps now. You remembers what that little gen'ral done I'm tellin' you of a few days back, don't you?"

Well, Tommy says he does, and then Jim says we'll all try'n think up somethin' to do, and for Tommy to make the best of things for to-night, and then we shakes hands all round, cordial, and us fellers goes off to do up the chores.

And what you reckon happens in the morning? Well, sir, Tommy comes a-runnin' over, all excited. He's out of breath till he hardly talks, and his cheeks is red, and his eyes is just a-shinin'.

"He's here!" he whispers. "And just went outdoors!"

"Who's here?" says Jim.

"The gen'ral! Percy's paw!" says Tommy, a-wrigglin all over like he can't keep still. "Hurry up and get your guns," he says.

Well, Jim looks at us, and we looks at Jim, and finally Jim turns to Tommy.

"Look-a-here, gen'ral," says he, "you don't figger on orderin' us to shoot no sure-enough gen'ral, does you?"

"No, no, no!" cries Tommy, most crazy. "Hurry up, before he goes back in the house."

"And remember there ain't to be no turnin' back," cautions Jim. "We keeps on a-goin' forwards."

"I'll remember," says Tommy. "Only hurry up. P—lease, Mr. Jim; hurry," he pleads. And with that we gets our guns, dubious, and lines up. And what you reckon? Tommy marches us out round again, and makes us halt, and there's Percy's paw, the sure-enough gen'ral, a-watchin' Percy and Marie a-playin' house. He is for a fact!

"Men," begins Tommy, when we're halted, "I'm in a mighty tight place, but thank Heaven, I'm little," he goes on, repeatin' them words Jim makes up that time. "Gimme liberty or gimme death!" says he. "And watch me!" And with that he starts off, and then stops sudden.

"Oh, I forgets the loophole," he says, discouraged, "and now I can't do it,

after all." But Jim's mouth is a-twitchin' some by now, and he looks from Tommy to the sure-enough gen'ral a-standin' over there, and then of a sudden he points to a hole in the coral.

"There's one, gen'ral," he says. "The finest kind of a loophole. They're used by the reg'lar army, constant," says he. And with that Tommy don't lose no time, but goes skedaddlin' for that hole like there ain't a minute left.

Well, sir; of course, everybody sees us by now, and Percy's paw, he sees us special, takin' the cigar out of his mouth and smilin' toward us, pleased-like. And then, first you knows, Tommy comes a-squirmin' through that hole and marches up to the sure-enough gen'ral like the least he's goin' to do is cut his head plumb off.

"You're my pris'ner!" says Tommy, severe.

"Well, well!" says the sure-enough gen'ral, all a-smilin'. "And who're you?"

"I'm a gen'ral," says Tommy, stout.

"Um!" says the sure-enough gen'ral, thoughtful. "Gen'ral who?"

"Mr. Jim's gen'ral," says Tommy. "You're my pris'ner. Ain't you goin' to surrender?" asks Tommy, and his tones is sure anxious.

And then, I'm doggoned if that sure-enough gen'ral don't look at us fellers a minute, still smilin', and then down at that little rooster of a Tommy a-standin' there with that tin sword, and then he quits smilin', and he draws himself up stiff, and salutes, and he says, says he, like he's talkin' to a sure-enough other gen'ral:

"Gen'ral," says he, "what flag does you fly?"

"Why, our flag, of course," says Tommy, a-pointin' to the little flag Jim sticks in the top of his gun.

"Then I surrenders with good grace," says he, and salutes, gravelike.

"Stay here till my men comes for you, then," says Tommy, severe again. "I got to get my ladylove."

And then he turns and asks Marie pointblank if she has him. And you just ought to see that Percy! When

Tommy first tackles the sure-enough gen'ral, Percy sticks his hands in his pockets, insolent, and grins, like in just about one minute there won't be no Tommy, nor no us fellers, nor nothin'. And then's his paw surrenders the look 't comes over his face is awful. He stares from his paw to Tommy and back again, like it's the day of judgment, and he just learns he's played the wrong system all his life.

And Marie, she stands there a-lookin' like she don't care a hoot one way or the other, much, so long's she sees a little excitement, until the sure-enough gen'ral surrenders and Tommy turns and asks her thataway. Then she just turns toward Percy, and after watchin' him a minute, she says, says she: "I thought you said he could lick 'em with one hand tied behind him?" she says, sarcastic, and laughs raucous.

"Bless my soul!" says the sure-enough gen'ral, grave. "It looks like I been trapped. Does I understand you brings these troops to assault a lady's heart?" And he waves his hand toward us fellers.

"Yes, sir," says Tommy, serious. "That's the way little gen'ral's does."

"Well, well, well!" says he, his eyes a-twinklin'. "And what does the little lady say?"

And with that the "little lady," which is Marie, of course, looks at Percy again, standin' there defiant, and her nose goes in the air like it's rubber.

"Pooh!" swaggers Percy, a-diggin' his heel in the dirt. "Who cares! I was a-goin' to stop goin' with you this mornin', anyway, and I forgets it."

And then, what you reckon? It's her tongue! Sure it is! I sees it flash red in the sun as she unhooks it toward him, and there she stands, half scroochin', a-pointin' it away at Percy like she despises him most thorough. Then she turns, jaunty, and goes a-struttin' up to Tommy.

"Does you love me again, Marie?" Tommy asks her, tender.

"I always did," says she, a-tossin' her yeller head. Which is the most deliberate lie I ever hears uttered.

THE BELLS OF PONT DU SABLE

By F. BERKELEY SMITH



HE big yellow car came ripping down the road. A clean, hard ribbon of a road, skirting the tawny marsh that lay this sparkling August morning under a glaze of turquoise-blue water at high tide.

With a devilish wail from its siren, the yellow car whizzed past my house abandoned by the marsh. I was just in time, as I raised my head above the rambling old wall of my courtyard, to catch sight of my good friend the curé on the back seat, holding on tight to his saucer-like hat. In the same rapid glance I saw the fluttering ends of a bottle-green veil in front of the curé's nose and knew Germaine was driving.

"Lucky curé," I said to myself, as I returned to my half-finished sketch. "Carried off again to luncheon by one of the dearest of little women."

No wonder during his lonely winters, when every villa or château of every friend of his for miles around is closed, and my vagabond village of Pont du Sable rarely sees a Parisian, the curé longs for midsummer. It is his gayest season, since hardly a day passes but some friend kidnaps him from his presbytery that lies snug and silent back of the crumbling wall which hides both his house and his wild garden from the gaze of the passer-by.

He is the kind of curé whom it is a joy to invite—this straight, strong curé who is French to the backbone, with his devil-may-care geniality, his irresistible smile of a comedian, his quick wit of an Irishman, and his heart of gold.

To-day Germaine had captured him and was speeding him away to a jolly luncheon of friends at her villa, some twenty kilomètres below Pont du Sable. Germaine with her trim, lithe figure and merry, brown eyes. Eyes that can become in a flash as calm and serious as the curé's, and in turn with her moods—for Germaine is a pretty collection of moods—gleam with the impulsive deviltry of a *gamine*. Germaine who teases an old vagabond painter like myself by daubing a purple moon in the middle of my morning sketch, adds a dab on my nose when I protest, and the next instant embraces me and begs my forgiveness.

I cannot conceive of any one not forgiving Germaine. This adorable little Parisienne, beneath whose firm and delicate beauty lies her warm heart, as golden in quality as the curé's.

Ah! It is gay enough in midsummer with Germaine and such other good bohemians as Alice de Bréville, Tanrade the composer, and his reverence to cheer my house abandoned by the marsh.

I heard the yellow car tearing back to Pont du Sable late that night. It slowed down as it neared my walled domain, and with a wrenching grunt stopped in front of my gate. The next instant the door of my den opened and in rushed the curé.

"All of us to luncheon to-morrow at The Three Wolves!" he cried, flinging his hat on the floor. Then, bending with a grin of satisfaction over the lamp chimney, he kindled the end of a fat cigarette he had rolled in the dark. His eyes were snapping, while the corners of his clean-shaven, humorous mouth twitched in a satisfied smile.

He strode up and down the room for some moments, his hands clasped behind him, his sun-tanned face beaming in the glow of the shaded lamplight, while he listened to my delight over the pleasant news he had brought.

"Ah! They are good to me, these children of mine!" he declared suddenly. "Germaine tells me there is a surprise in store for me and that I am not to know until to-morrow at luncheon. Beyond that she won't tell me nothing, the little minx, except that I managed to make her confess that Alice was in the secret."

He glanced at his watch.

"*Sapristi!*" said he. "I must be getting to bed; you, too, my old one, for we must get an early start in the morning, if we are to reach The Three Wolves by noon." He recovered his hat from the floor, straightened up, brushed the cigarette ashes from the breast of his long black soutane, shiny from wear, and held out his strong hand.

"Sleep well," he counseled, "for to-morrow we shall be *en fête*."

Then he swung open my door and passed out into the night, whistling as he crossed my courtyard a *café-chantant* air that Germaine had taught him.

A moment later the siren of the yellow car sent forth its warning wail, and he was speeding back to his presbytery under the guidance of Germaine's chauffeur.

The curé was raking out the oysters. He stood on the sandy rim of a pool of clear sea water that lay under the noonday sun like a liquid emerald. As Monsieur le Curé plunged in his long rake and drew it back heavy with those excellent bivalves for which the restaurant at The Three Wolves has long been famous, his tall black figure silhouetted against the distant sea and sky reminded me of some great sea crow fishing for its breakfast.

To the right of him crouched the restaurant, a low wooden structure with its back to the sea. It has the appearance of being cast there at high tide, its zigzag line of tiled roofs drying in

the sea air and sun, like the scaled shell of some stranded monster of the sea. There is a cavernous old kitchen within, resplendent in shining copper—a busy kitchen to-day, sizzling in good things and pungent with the aroma of two tender young chickens, basting on a spit. A jolly old kitchen, far more enticing than the dingy long dining room adjoining it, whose walls are frescoed in panels representing bottle-green lobsters, gaping succulent clams, and ferocious crabs sidling away indignantly from nets held daintily by fine ladies and their gallants, in costumes that were in vogue before the Revolution. Even when it pours this cheerless old dining room at The Three Wolves is deserted, since there are half a score of far cozier little round pavilions for lovers and intimate friends, built over the oyster pools.

Beyond them, hard by the desolate beach, lie the rocks known as The Three Wolves. In calm weather the surf smashes over their glistening backs; at low water, as it happened to be to-day, the seethe of the tide scurried about their dripping bellies green with hairy seaweed.

Now and then came cheery ripples of laughter from our little pavilion, where Germaine and Alice de Bréville were arranging a mass of scarlet nasturtiums, twining their green leaves and tendrils amongst the plates of *hors d'œuvres* and among the dust-caked bottles of Chablis and Burgundy. Alice, whose dark hair and olive skin are in strong contrast to Germaine's saucy beauty.

They had banished that good bohemian, Tanrade, who had offered his clumsy help and had spilled the sardines. He had climbed on the roof and dropped pebbles down on them through the cracks, and had later begged forgiveness through the keyhole. Now he was yelling like an Indian, this celebrated composer of ballets, as he swung a little peasant maid of ten in a creaky swing beyond the pool—a dear little maid with eyes as dark as Alice's, who screamed from sheer delight and insisted on that good fellow

playing all the games that lay about them, from *tonneau* to *bilboquet*.

Together the curé and I carried the basket, now plentifully filled with oysters, back to the kitchen, while Tanrade was hailed from the pavilion, much to the little maid's despair.

"*Dépêchez-vous!*" cried Alice, who had straightway embraced her exiled Tanrade on his return and was now waving a summons to the curé and myself.

"*Bon!*" shouted back the curé. "*Allons, mes enfants, à table!*—And the one who has no appetite shall be cast into the sea—by the heels," added his reverence.

Ah, what a breakfast followed! Such a rushing of little maids back and forth from the jolly kitchen with the great platters of oysters. What a sole smothered in a mussel sauce! What a lobster, scarlet as the cap of a cardinal and garnished in crisp Romaine! And the chickens! And the mutton! And the soufflé of potatoes and the salad of shrimps! *Mon Dieu*, what a luncheon! "Sprayed," as the French say, with that rare old Chablis and mellow Burgundy. And what laughter and camaraderie went with it from the very beginning, for to be at table with friends in France is to be *en fête*. It is the hour when hearts are warmest and merriest.

Ah, you dear little women! You who know just when to give those who love you a friendly pressure of the hand or the gift of your lips if needs be, even in the presence of so austere a personage as Monsieur le Curé. You who understand. You who are tender or merry with the mood, or contrary to the verge of exasperation—only to caress with the subtle light of your eyes and be forgiven.

It was not until we had reached our coffee and liqueurs that the surprise for the curé was forthcoming. Hardly had the tiny glasses been filled, when the clear tone of the bell ringing from the ancient church of The Three Wolves made us cease our talk to listen.

Alice turned to the curé. It was evi-

dently the moment she had been waiting for.

"Listen," said Alice softly. "How delicious!"

"It is the bell of St. Marie," returned the curé.

Even Tanrade was silent now, for the curé had made the sign of the cross, and as his fingers moved I saw a peculiar look come into his eyes—a look of mingled disappointment and resignation.

Again Alice spoke.

"Your cracked bell at Pont du Sable has not long to ring, my friend," she said very tenderly.

"One must be content, my child, with what one has," replied the curé gravely.

Alice leaned toward him and whispered something in his ear, Germaine smiling the while.

I saw his reverence give a little start of surprise.

"No, no!" he protested half aloud. "Not that! It is too much to ask of you with all your rehearsals at the Bouffes Parisiennes coming."

"*Parbleu!*" exclaimed Alice. "It will not be so very difficult. I shall accomplish it. You shall see what a concert we shall give—we shall make a lot of money, every one will be there. It has the voice of a frog, your bell. *Dieu!* What a fuss it makes over its crack! You shall have a new one. Two new ones, *mon ami*, even if we have to make bigger the belfry of your little gray church to hang them."

The curé grew quite red. I saw for an instant his eyes fill with tears; then, with a benign smile, he laid his hand firmly over Alice's and, lifting the tips of her fingers, kissed them twice in gratefulness.

He was very happy. He was happy all the way back in Germaine's yellow car to Pont du Sable. Happy when he thrust his heavy key in the rusty lock of the small door that let him into his silent garden, cool under the stars, and sweet with the scent of roses.

A long winter has passed since that memorable luncheon at The Three Wolves. Our little pavilion over the

emerald pool will never see us reunited, I fear. A cloud has fallen over my good friend the curé, a cloud so unbelievable and yet so dense, if it be true, and so filled with ominous mutterings of thunder and lightning—crime, defalcation, banishment, and the like—that I go about my work dazed at the rumored situation.

They tell me the curé still says mass, and, when it is over, regains the presbytery by way of the back lane skirting the marsh. I am also told that he rarely even ventures into his garden, but spends most of his days and half of his nights alone in his den with the door locked and strict orders to his faithful old servant Marie, who adores him, that he will see no one who calls.

For days I have not laid eyes on him. He who kept his napkin tied in a sailor's knot in my cupboard and came to breakfast, luncheon, or dinner when he pleased, waking up my house abandoned by the marsh with his good humor, joking with Suzette, my little maid-of-all-work, until her fair cheeks grew the rosier, and rousing me out of the blues with his quick wit and his hearty laugh.

It seems impossible to me that he is guilty of what he is accused, yet the facts seem undeniable.

Only the good go wrong, is it not so? The bad have become so commonplace they do not attract our attention.

Now, the ways of the curé were always just. I have never known him to do a mean thing in his life, far less a dishonest one. I have known him to give the last few sous he possessed to a hungry fisher woman who needed bread for herself and her brood of children, and content himself with what was left among the few remaining vegetables in his garden. There are days, too, when he is forced to live frugally upon a peasant soup and a pear for dinner, and there have been occasions, to my knowledge, when the soup had to be omitted and his menu reduced to a novel, a cigarette, and the pear.

It is a serious matter the separation of the state from the church in France,

since it has left the priest with the munificent salary of four hundred francs a year, out of which he must pay his rent and give to the poor.

Once we dined nobly together upon two fat sparrows, and again we had a blackbird for dinner. He had killed it that morning from his window while shaving, for I saw the lather dried on the stock of his duck gun.

Monsieur le Curé is ingenious when it comes to hard times.

Again there are days when he is in luck, when some generous parishioner has had the forethought to restock his larder. Upon such bountiful occasions he insists on Tanrade and myself dining with him at the presbytery as long as these luxuries last, refusing to dine with either of us until there is no more left of his own to give.

The last time I saw him I had noticed a marked change in his reverence. He was moody and unshaven, and his saucer-like hat was as dusty and spotted as his frayed soutane. Only now and then he gave out flashes of his old geniality, and even they seemed forced. I was amazed at the change in him; and yet, when I consider all I have heard since, I do not wonder much at his appearance.

Tanrade tells me—and he evidently believes it—that some fifteen hundred francs, raised by Alice's concert and paid over to the curé to purchase the bells for his little gray church, have disappeared and that his reverence refuses to give any account.

Despite his hearty bohemian spirit, Tanrade, like most musicians, is a dreamer and as ready as a child to believe anything and anybody. Being a master of the pianoforte and a composer of rare talent, he can hardly be called sane. And yet, though I have seen him enthusiastic, misled, moved to tears over nothing, indignant over an imaginary insult, or ready to forgive any one who could be fool enough to be his enemy, I have never known him so thoroughly upset or so positive in his convictions as when the other morning, as I sat loafing before my fire, he entered my den.

"It is incredible, *mon vieux*, incredible!" he gasped, throwing himself disconsolately into my armchair. "I have just been to the presbytery; not only does he refuse to give an account of the money, but he declines to offer any explanation beyond the one that 'he spent it.' More, he sits hunched up before his stove in the little room off the kitchen, chewing the end of a cigarette. Why, he didn't even ask me to have a drink—the curé, *mon ami*—our curé—the man we love! *Mon Dieu*, what a mess! Ah, *Mon Dieu*!"

He sank his chin in his hands and gazed at me with a look of utter despair.

I regarded him keenly, then I went to the decanter and poured for him a stiff glass of applejack.

"Drink that," said I, "and get normal."

With an impetuous gesture he waved it away.

"No, not now!" he exclaimed. "Wait until I tell you all—nothing until I tell you."

"Go on, then," I returned. "I want to hear all about this wretched business. Go slow and tell it to me from top to bottom. I am not as convinced of the curé's guilt as you are, old boy. There may be nothing in it more than a pack of village lies, and if there is a vestige of the truth, we may, by putting our heads together, help matters."

He started to speak, but I held up my hand.

"One thing before you go on," I declared, with conviction. "I can no more believe the curé is dishonest than Alice or yourself. It is ridiculous to presume so for a moment. I have known the curé too well. He is a prince. He has a heart as big as all outdoors. Look at the good he's done in this village. There is not a vagabond in it but will tell you he is as right as rain. Ask the people he helps what they think of him; they'll tell you 'he's just the curé for Pont du Sable.' *Voilà!* That's what they'll tell you, and they mean it. All the gossip in the world can't hurt him. Here," I

cried, forcing the glass into his hand, "get that down you, you maker of bal-lets, and proceed with the horrible details, but proceed gently, merrily, with the right sort of beat in your heart, for the curé is as much a friend of yours as he is of mine."

Tanrade shrugged his broad shoulders, and for some moments sipped his glass. At length he set it down on the broad table at his elbow and said slowly:

"You know how good Alice is, how much she will do for any one she is fond of—for a friend, I mean, like the curé. Very well, it is not an easy thing to give a concert in Paris that earns fifteen hundred francs for a curé whom it is safe to say no one in the audience, save Germaine, Alice, and myself had ever heard of. It was a veritable *tour de force* to organize. You were not there. I'm glad you were not. It was a dull old concert that would not have amused you much—Lassive fell ill at the last moment, Delmar was in a bad humor, and the quartette had played the night before at a ball at the Elysée and were barely awake. Yet in spite of it the theatre was packed, a chic audience, too. Frambord came out with half a column in the *Critique des Arts* with a pretty compliment to Alice's executive energy, and added 'that it was one of the rare soirées of the season.' He must have been drunk when he wrote it. I played badly—I never can play when they talk. It was as garrulous as a fish market in front. *Enfin!* It was over, and we telegraphed his reverence the result; from a money standpoint it was a *succès fou*."

Tanrade leaned back and for a few seconds gazed at the ceiling of my den.

"Where every penny has gone," he resumed, with a strained smile, "*Dieu sait!* There is no bell, not even the sound of one, *et voilà!*"

He turned abruptly and reached for his glass, forgetting he had drained it. A fly was buzzing on its back in the last drop. And then we both smiled grimly, for we were thinking of Monsieur le Curé.

I rang the bell of the presbytery early the next morning by inserting my jackknife to spare my fingers, in a loop at the end of a crooked wire which dangles over the rambling wall of the curé's garden. The door itself is of thick oak and framed by stones overgrown with lichens—a solid old playground for nervous lizards when the sun shines, and a favorite sticking place for snails when it rains. I had to tug hard on the crooked wire before I heard a faint jingle issuing in response from the curé's cavernous kitchen, whose hooded chimney and stone-paved floor I love to paint.

Now came the klop-klop of a pair of sabots; then the creak of a heavy key as it turned over twice in the rusty lock, and his faithful Marie cautiously opened the garden door. I do not know how old Marie is, there is so little left of this good soul to guess by. Her small shrunken body is bent from age and hard work. Her hands are heavy—the fingers gnarled and out of proportion to her gaunt thin wrists. She has the wrinkled, leathery face of some kindly gnome. She opened her eyes in a sort of mute appeal as I inquired if Monsieur le Curé were at home.

"Ah! My poor monsieur, his reverence see no one," she faltered. "Ah, *mais*!" she sighed, knowing that I knew the change in her master and the gossip thereof.

"My good Marie," I said, persuasively patting her bony shoulder, "tell his reverence that I must see him. Old friends as we are——"

"*Bon Dieu, oui!*" she exclaimed, with another sigh. "Such old friends as you and he! I will go and see," said she, and turned bravely back down the path that led to his door, while I waited among the roses.

A few moments later Marie beckoned to me from the kitchen window.

"He will see you," she whispered, as I crossed the stone floor of the kitchen. "He is in the little room." And she pointed to a narrow door close by the big chimney, a door with old-fashioned panes upon which are glued transparent chromos of wild ducks.

I knocked gently.

"*Entrez!*" came a tired voice from within.

I turned the knob and entered his den—a dingy little box of a room sunk a step below the level of the kitchen, with a smoke-grimed ceiling and corners littered with dusty books and pamphlets.

He was sitting with his back to me, humped up in a worn armchair before his small stove, just as Tanrade had found him. As I edged around his table, past a rack holding his guns half-hidden under two dilapidated game bags and a bicycle tire long out of service, he turned his hollow eyes to mine with a look I shall long remember and feebly grasped my outstretched hand.

"Come," said I, "you're going to get a grip on yourself, *mon ami*. You're going to get out of this wretched, unkempt state of melancholia at once. Tanrade has told me much. You know as well as I do the village is a nest of gossip, that they make a mountain out of a molehill. If I were a pirate chief and had captured this vagabond port I'd have a few of those wagging tongues taken out and keelhaunched in the bay."

He started as if in pain and again turned his haggard eyes to mine.

"I don't believe there's a word of truth in it," I declared hotly.

"There—is," he returned hoarsely, trembling so his voice faltered. "I—I am—a thief."

He sat bolt upright in his chair, staring at me like a man who had suddenly become insane. His declaration was so sudden and amazing that for some moments I knew not what to reply; then a feeling of pity took possession of me. He was still my friend whatever he had done. I saw his gaze revert to the crucifix hanging between the stained engravings of two venerable saints over the mantel back of the stone, a mantel heaped with old shot bags and empty cartridge shells.

"How the devil did it happen?" I blurted out at length. "You don't mean to say you stole the money?"

"Spent it," he replied half inaudibly.

"How spent it? On yourself?"

"No, no! Thank God——"

"How then?"

He leaned forward, his head sunk in his hands, his eyes riveted upon mine.

"There is so much dire need of money," he said, catching his breath between his words. "We are all human, all weak in the face of another's misery. It takes a strong heart, a strong mind, a strong body to resist. There are some temptations too terrible even for a priest. I wish with all my heart that Alice had never given it into my hands."

I started to speak, but he held up his arms.

"Do not ask me more," he pleaded.

"I cannot tell you. I am ill and weak—my courage has gone."

"Is there any of the money left?" I ventured quietly, after waiting in vain for him to continue.

"I do not know," he returned wearily. "Most of it is gone. Over there beneath the papers in the little drawer," he said, pointing to the corner, "I kept it there. Yes, there is some left, but I have not dared count it."

Again there ensued a painful silence while I racked my brain for a scheme that might still save the situation, bad as it looked. In the state he was in I had not the heart to worry out of him a fuller confession. Most of the fifteen hundred francs was gone, that was plain enough. What he had done with it I could only conjecture. Had he given it to save another, I wondered, some man or woman whose very life and reputation depended upon it? Had he fallen in love hopelessly and past all reasoning? There is no man that some woman cannot make her slave. It was not many years ago that a far more saintly priest than he eloped to Belgium with the pretty schoolmistress of Les Fosses. Then I thought of Germaine. That little minx badly in debt? No, no, impossible. She was too clever, too honest for that.

"Have you seen Alice?" I broke our silence at length.

He shook his head wearily. "I could

not," he replied, "I know the bitterness she must feel toward me."

At that moment Marie knocked at the door. As she entered I saw that her wrinkled face was drawn, as with lowered eyes she regarded a yellow envelope stamped with the seal of the République Française.

With a trembling hand she laid it beside the curé and left the room.

The curé caught his breath; then he rose nervously to his feet, steadying himself against the table's edge as he tore open the envelope and glanced at its contents. With a low moan he sank back in his chair.

"Go!" he pleaded huskily. "I wish to be alone. I have been summoned before the mayor."

Never before in the history of the whole country about had a curé been hauled to account. Pont du Sable was buzzing like a beehive over the affair. Along its single thoroughfare, flanked by the stone houses of the fishermen, the gossips clustered in groups. What I caught in passing proved to me again that his reverence had more friends than enemies.

It was in the mayor's kitchen, which serves him as executive chamber as well, that the official investigation took place.

With the exception of the municipal council, consisting of the baker, the butcher, the grocer, and two raisers of cattle, none was to be admitted at the mayor's save Tanrade, myself, and Alice de Bréville, whose presence the mayor had judged imperative and who had been summoned from Paris.

Tanrade and I had arrived early—the mayor greeting us at the gate of his trim little garden and ushering us to our chairs in the clean, well-worn kitchen, with as much solemnity as if there had been a death in the house. Here we sat under the low ceiling of rough beams and waited in a funereal silence, broken only by the slow ticking of his tall clock in the corner. It was working as hard as it could, its brass pendulum swinging lazily toward

three o'clock, the hour appointed for the investigation.

Monsieur le Maire to-day was no longer the genial, ruddy old raiser of cattle who stops me whenever I pass his gate with a hearty welcome. He was all mayor to-day, clean-shaven to the raw edges of his cropped gray side whiskers, with a look of grave importance in his shrewd eyes and a firm setting of his wrinkled upper lip that indicated the dignity of his office, a fact which was further accentuated by his carefully brushed suit of black, a clean-starched collar, and a tri-colored silk sash with gold tassels, which he is forced to gird his fat paunch with when he either marries you or sends you to jail.

The clock ticked on, its oaken case reflecting the copper light from a line of saucepans hanging beside it on the wall. Presently the municipal council filed in and seated themselves about a centre table upon which lay in readiness pen, ink, and paper. Being somewhat ill at ease in his starched shirt, the florid grocer coughed frequently, while the two cattle raisers in their black blouses talked in guttural whispers over a bargain in calves. Through the open window, screened with cool rose vines, came the faint murmur of the village. Suddenly it ceased. I rose, and going to the window, looked up the street. The curé was coming down it, striding along as straight as a savage, nodding to those who nodded to him. An old fisher woman hobbled forth and kissed his hand. Young and old, gamblers of the sea, lifted their caps as he passed.

"The census of opinion is with him," I whispered to Tanrade as I regained my chair. "He has his old grit with him, too."

The next instant, his reverence strode in before us, firm, cool, and so thoroughly master of himself that a feeling of intense relief stole over me.

"I have come," he said, in a clear, even voice, "in answer to your summons, Monsieur le Maire."

The mayor rose, bowed gravely, waved the curé to a chair opposite the municipal council, and continued in si-

lence the closely written contents of two official documents containing the charge.

The stopping of an automobile at his gate now caused him to look up significantly. Madame de Bréville had arrived. As Alice entered every man in the room rose to his feet. Never had I seen her look lovelier, gowned as she was in simple black, her dark hair framing her exquisite features pale as ivory, her sensitive mouth tense as she pressed Tanrade's hand nervously and took her seat beside us. For an instant I saw her dark eyes flash as she met the steady gaze of the curé's.

"In the name of the République Française," began the mayor in measured tones.

The curé folded his arms, his eyes fixed on the open door.

"Pardon me," interrupted Alice, "I wish it to be distinctly understood before you begin, Monsieur le Maire, that I am here wholly against my will."

The curé turned sharply.

"You have summoned me," continued Alice, "and there was no alternative but to come. I know nothing in detail concerning the charge against Monsieur le Curé, nor do I wish to take any part whatsoever in this unfortunate affair. It is imperative that I return to Paris in time to play to-night. I beg of you that you will let me go at once."

There was a polite murmur of surprise from the municipal council. The curé sprang to his feet.

"Alice, my child!" he cried. "Look at me."

Her eyes again met his own, her lips twitching nervously, her breast heaving.

"I wish you to judge me before you go," he pleaded. "They accuse me of being a thief." His voice rose suddenly to its full vibrant strength. "They do not know the truth."

Alice leaned forward, her lips parted, her breath coming quick.

"God only knows what this winter has been," declared his reverence. "Empty nets—always empty nets!"

He struck the table with his clinched fist.

"Empty nets," he cried, "until I could bear it no longer. My children were in dire need. They came to you," he declared, turning to the mayor, "and you refused them."

The mayor shrugged his shoulders with a grunt of resentment.

"I gave what I could, while it lasted, from the public fund," he explained frankly. "There were new roads to be cut."

"Roads!" shouted the curé. "What are roads in comparison to illness and starvation? They came to me," he went on, turning to Alice, "little children, mothers ill with little children and not a sou in the house and none to be earned fishing. Old men crying for bread for those whom they loved. I grew to hate the very thought of the bells. They seemed to me a needless luxury among so much misery."

His voice rose until it rang clear in the room.

"I gave it to them!" he cried out. "There in my little drawer lay the power to save those who were near death from sickness, from dirt, from privation."

Alice's ringless hands were clinched in her lap. "And I saw as I gave," continued the curé, "the end of pain and of hunger. Little by little I gave, hoping somehow to replace it, until I dared give no more."

He paused and drew forth from the breast of his soutane a small cotton sack that had once held his gunwads.

"Here is what is left, gentlemen," said he, facing the municipal council. "I have counted it at last. Four hundred and eighty francs, sixty-five centimes."

There were tears now in Alice's eyes. Dark eyes that followed the curé's with a look of tenderness and pain.

The mayor sat breathing irritably.

As for the municipal council, it was evident to Tanrade and myself that not one of these plain, red-eared citizens was eager to send a priest to jail; it was their custom to occasionally go to mass.

"Marianne's illness," continued the curé, "was an important item. You

seemed to consider her case of typhoid as a malady that would cure itself if let alone. The fisher woman, Marianne, needed care, serious care, strong as she was. The girl she saved from drowning last year, and her baby, she still shelters among her own children in her hut. They, too, had to be fed; for Marianne was helpless to care for them. There was the little boy, too, of the Gavons—alone with a case of measles well developed when I found him on the draughty floor of a loft. The mother and father had been drunk together for three days at Bar la Rose. And there were others—the Mère Gailiard, who would have been sold out for her rent, and poor old Varnet, the fisherman. He had no home, no money, no friends. He is eighty-four years old. Most of the winter he slept in a hedge under a cast-off sail. I got him a better roof and something for his stomach, Monsieur le Maire."

He paused again and drew out a folded paper from his pocket.

"Here is a list of all I can remember I have given to, and the amounts as near as I can recall them," he said.

Again he turned to Alice.

"It is to you, dear friend, I have come to confess," he continued. "As for you, gentlemen, my very life, the church I love, all that this village means to me lie in your hands. I do not beg your mercy. I have sinned and I shall take the consequences. All I ask you to do is to judge fairly the error of my ways."

Monsieur le Curé took his seat.

"It is for you, Madame de Bréville, to decide," said the mayor after a few moments' conference with the council, "since the amount in question was given by your hand."

Alice rose. Softly she slipped past the municipal council of Pont du Sabre until she stood looking up into the curé's eyes. Then her arms went about his strong neck, and she kissed him like a sister.

"Child!" I heard him murmur.

"We shall give another concert," she whispered in his ear.

The EAGLE'S FEATHER



By EMILY POST

A STORY IN THREE PARTS.—PART I.

CHAPTER I.



It was in Paris—a particularly warm afternoon in early spring. The proprietor of the Café Royal looked at the thermometer with utmost satisfaction; assuredly it was lucky that such a favorable day should be the very one upon which his terrace was ready for the summer season. The hour of the *apéritif* was close at hand—that mystical hour when the working spirit of the Parisian seems to fall asleep, and some new, tranquil other self possesses him.

Back from the street, near the wall of ivy that formed a screen between the Café Royal and the Yellow Boar, was a group of five men.

These five men, with one other, who had not yet arrived at the restaurant, formed a little brotherhood of inseparables, like many another such clique, famous in the chronicles of that foster-mother of talent, Paris. Of those now sitting at the table, the most conspicuous by far was the herculean blond giant, Paul Verney, the sculptor, noted for sweet-tempered straightness in all his dealings with both man and woman, for appreciative valuation of the achievements of others, and an unassumed modesty in regard to his own gifts and repute.

Next to Verney sat Marcel Bluet, the genre painter, easily remembered by his classically handsome face and loose, soft clothes. Then came an empty chair, and then Antoine de Navins, a young architect of much promise, something of a dandy in dress, with a diminutive waxed mustache twisted to needle points. Jules Charante, the editor of the *Revue du Monde*, was adjusting his monocle between the prominent bones of cheek and brow, as he listened to the last, but by no means least, member of the fraternity, Thomas Cadwallader Smith, an American. "Little Smith" he was called in the quarter—a man who painted with lavish use of energy and materials, but whose chief reason for living in Paris was that he loved it; and whose ambitionless, optimistic temperament made him popular everywhere.

In the act of letting his melting asinthe sugar fall in an opalescent cascade into a tall tumbler of water, Bluet jumped suddenly to his feet; and, snapping his fingers, with a circular wave, beckoned the sixth member of their brotherhood, who, at that moment, was entering beneath the awning.

This last arrival raised his chin and eyebrows a trifle in recognition, and at once began to zigzag his way among the tables. He was slight, boyish, small-boned, and brown of coloring; an inconspicuous type, that might pass unnoticed in a crowd of strangers; yet in-

terested looks and greetings met him on every side. At the table of his five friends he was received with a general shout of "Ah, here thou art!" "At last, *mon vieux!*"

The new arrival dropped into the vacant chair, and took off his hat. His smile was bright, like that of a boy, and his brown hair, brushed straight off his high forehead and sleekly following the outline of his small skull, added to the impression of naïveté, of youth. His eyes were dark, and, like his face, constantly changing expression. He had no particular physical trait that marked his nationality, but it was probably the brownness of his skin—partly natural, partly tan—that made strangers often take him for an Italian.

The attention of the group remained centred upon him, as though waiting for his news. As he said nothing, Verney asked: "Have you been all this time at rehearsal? How does it go?"

"Very well, I think," Piotrovski answered half absently; then he added, with more enthusiasm: "Donnay is the wonder of managers. La Gioconde is going to excel herself this time—the part suits her admirably."

At this all showed a lively interest, and, carried away by sudden enthusiasm, Bluet cried: "Then bravo, Jan! Paris is surely to have a treat to-night. Come, friends, a toast! To Jan, our Jan, and his greatest creation, 'Le Fidèle!'"

Piotrovski started out of his preoccupation, as though in sudden fright; and, restraining the raised glasses on either side of him, cried: "Ah, don't—my good friends, *don't!* Drink to our friendship, if you like—and call me your Jan—I love that—or drink to Donnay or La Gioconde! But don't drink to 'Le Fidèle' as my greatest creation. You dishearten me!"

All the light went out of his face. So might have sat the brooding image of hopeless failure. Certainly no one would have supposed him the greatest dramatic poet of the day on the eve of fresh success.

"Jan, Jan, truly thou art too much!" exclaimed Little Smith. "As for me, I

fervently thank the gods for the great privilege which is given me of being able to touch the coat sleeve of genius; of being able, when they speak of Piotrovski, to pipe up merrily and wave my handkerchief, and cry: 'I know him!' I wonder what the multitude, who burn incense before his picture, and scramble for *éditions de luxe* of anything he chooses to write, would say if they could see him now? Here he sits, the picture of woe, because tomorrow he will be celebrated by one more success. One poor—great—little success!" He whimpered the last, as though lamenting.

The others, apparently, agreed with Little Smith—all except Verney. He leaned across the tiny table, and put his great hand on Piotrovski's shoulder; with the other he raised his glass. "To 'Ysulinde,'" he said quietly.

Piotrovski raised his head, and a wave of radiance passed over his features, as quickly followed by wistfulness as he looked up at the gigantic figure of his best friend. "If I only could—if I only could!" he said, in a low, tense voice. But the next moment, as though ashamed of his seeming want of gratitude, he half stammered: "Thank you—all of you! It is not that I am ungrateful, it is only that—don't you see?—it makes me feel"—he broke out helplessly—"as though I were obtaining benefits on false pretenses!" He threw his hands out in a way he had, with the second and third finger more widely separated than the others—Verney put them like this in his statue of Inspiration, also in his Endymion. "I know what it will be: They will hunt all over for me to-night until they find me, and I shall be dragged before the curtain. The house will ring full of bravos—God alone knows why, except that I happen to be the vogue—and I shall bow and try to look pleased, and stammer some senseless words that have no meaning to me. But"—he leaned over the table, with his hands clasped tight, his face now glowing with enthusiasm—"some day I shall give my beloved, indulgent Paris something worthy of her! Some day, when

I finish 'Ysulinde'!" Again his expression changed, all boyishness seemed to have vanished, and a suggestion almost of fanaticism gleamed in the shadowed depths of his eyes. He spoke very slowly: "Ah, my friends, you all know I have but one hope, one thought, one purpose. All my life revolves around that one effort—that one I cannot finish—which was to have been, which I pray with all my soul may be, a really great tragedy."

Not one in the little circle around him thought of smiling, none doubted for a moment the possibility of his knowing—what not one man in a thousand does know—which of his own work is best. His voice had been so low that those at the nearest table could not have heard what he said; the intensity of his feelings was revealed only to this little group of his intimates. That he should consider his dramas insignificant, and his success the stroke of luck—as he himself put it, like attracting the notice of a capricious woman because of a fantastic necktie—seemed to them incomprehensible. They did, however, do him the justice of believing in his sincerity; no one who knew him could doubt that! So they all marveled at the genius, loved the man, and let it go at that. Verney, alone, understood as well as believed. But then the others did not know whole pages of "Ysulinde" by heart, as he did.

They dropped the subject of the new play, and talked instead of the coming Salon. But even then Piotrovski remained the central personage.

"Will you sit for me to-morrow, Jan?" asked Bluet eagerly. "There is an expression I need urgently for my poet."

Verney at the same time was observing Piotrovski closely; he took out a pad and pencil, and sketched.

Piotrovski laughed good-naturedly. "But, of course, my friend, if I can be of use, by all means!"

After the hour for a sitting had been arranged, the conversation turned again, and they all teased De Navins, declaring he was in love. De Navins

sighed and looked appropriately sentimental.

"Here is a philanthropic idea—I give it to you gratis," suggested Charante. "Have a deep love affair, a veritable grand passion, and make Jan your confessor. He says he can't do love scenes."

"Jan would better have a love affair himself," returned De Navins.

For a moment there was the suggestion of an awkward silence, during which they all glanced apprehensively at Piotrovski; but the latter took the remark lightly, exclaiming: "My experiences are decreed by Fate to be of little worth—so you see it must be from those of my friends that I draw my inspiration. Luck to yours, Antoine!" He drained his glass and arose.

A moment later, as he and his companions were leaving the café, a beautifully appointed carriage passed, in which were two ladies. The younger woman was facing the restaurant, leaning forward slightly, and, as she spoke to her companion, her smile was radiant. Suddenly, her attention was caught by Piotrovski—her sentence broke off, and for the space of a second her glance was leveled directly at him. With a slight start, as though of recognition, she inclined still farther forward. Then the carriage passed on.

Little Smith stared down the street, shrugged his shoulders, and made a wry face. "That's how it is! To him that hath the gifts of the gods—to him is given the distinguished consideration of beautiful ladies. Who was that, Jan?"

"I don't know who she is." He shrugged his shoulders, with assumed indifference; but, to his friend's amazement, he seemed agitated. Then, hailing a passing fiacre, he jumped in. "You will be there to-night?" he asked wistfully of those on the sidewalk.

"But surely!" was returned in enthusiastic chorus.

"Till to-night, then! To the Théâtre Français!" he called to the driver, and was trundled out of sight.

CHAPTER II.

The curtain fell on the third act. In the auditorium the lights and applause blazed out together, then the lights were lowered, and the curtain lifted once more on the moonlit battle scene. Amid "Ahs!" "Bravos!" the din of clapping palms, and the rapping of canes, the curtain came down again, and the lights remained up.

The buzz of conversation spread quickly through the boxes and galleries, and the audience relaxed from its attitude of concentration. Down in the orchestra stalls, men with their tall hats on the backs of their heads stood staring through their opera glasses at the occupants of the boxes, while above the din of voices rose the Paris newsboy's familiar nasal cry that ends like the snapping of a whip: "*Le Soir! Le Soir! L'Entr'acte!*"

Out in the *promenoir*, a group of journalists were discussing the play. "It is astonishing," said one, "that the public appreciates his work. He is much more a poet than a dramatist." "Yes, but he is an original!" said another. "His genius is undeniable." A third extolled the flexibility of his stanzas, in which thought succeeded striking thought with the effortless grace of pearls slipping along a string. Against these were raised occasional dissenting voices; those who wanted vivid images of glaring colors, clashing cymbals, and action, rather than ideas, expressed disappointment. Those who subsist on meat and strong drink fare badly on nuts and wild honey.

Behind the curtain, Piotrovski—the strain of a first performance affecting, as always, his every faculty—looked nervously through the bull's-eye at the brilliant audience. The women's dresses in the boxes and first galleries made a bright band as of flowers. Many of the men had their backs turned to the stage, but here and there he recognized well-known figures, firstnighters, critics, with the indiscriminates that make up that body known as the general public. He saw also various familiar and friendly faces, and his gaze

lingered with affection at the left-stage *baignoire*—where men's black coats made a yawning space, relieved only by the white blaze of shirt fronts. The great width of Verney's, precisely in the centre, was flanked by the crumpling, shiny white plaits covering the affectionate heart of Bluet, and the stiff, boardlike achievement of Little Smith. Verney's leonine head was thrown into relief against the black shoulder of Charante, who stood behind him. Beside him again, Piotrovski saw the arm of another figure, which he knew to be that of De Navins.

With a feeling of content that these good friends were with him, he let his glance follow around the house across the ring of faces, until—suddenly, with an unaccountable quickening of pulse, he recognized, in a box on the right, the lady who that afternoon had passed in the victoria.

Slender, but not angular, she was what the French call *fausse maigre*. She wore a white dress of thin, filmy material, cut out a little in the neck, with a string of pearls around her throat; her hat, neither large nor small, was of white straw, with some roses on it. Piotrovski knew nothing of fashions, and yet he realized, without the slightest question, that she was not only dressed according to fashion, but was the very essence of fashion in its best form.

She sat against the right-hand side of the box, so that her face was turned toward him, indolently waving a fan of long, white ostrich feathers—ostrich-feather fans had long gone out of mode, but in her hands they had come in again. Her head was small, and her waving hair was very dark brown, except where, here and there, a high light revealed a coppery glint. Her brown eyes, deep set between thick lashes, looked darker than they were, in contrast with a pale and beautifully moulded oval face; her mouth was rather small, but quite lovely—especially in expression. He realized that hers was a personality which one might constantly pass by without notice, but which, if once it should claim atten-

tion, would never thereafter lose its hold.

The manager pounded with his stick on the stage, and Piotrovski made his way to the wings, thence into the *baignoire* where his friends were. As he entered, Bluet wanted to put him in front, but he stood up in the farthest corner, at the back of the box. Again his eyes were drawn to the unknown lady on the other side of the house. He wanted not so much to observe her, this time, as to study the effect of the play upon her. There was not much light, as it was the scene where they had carried the dying poet, stretched upon a cot, into the hospital tent. The princess, in the costume of a sister of mercy, was kneeling beside him, telling the beads of her rosary. Through the first part of the act, the poet, in his delirium, fitfully rehearsed scenes of battle, interspersed with the story of his love for the princess.

Piotrovski's unknown was leaning forward, utterly absorbed, and as the poet began the verses: "*Le plus suprême désir, ma princesse adorée,*" she held her fan closed tightly in her clinched hand, which rested on the railing of the box. Her lips were slightly parted, and her expression so far interpreted the poet's words that she might herself have been reciting the poem. The whole house remained hushed and breathless during this scene and the one following, where the poet, in his last flicker of consciousness, becomes aware of his surroundings, and realizes that it is the princess who is kneeling at his side.

All this time Piotrovski watched the woman in the box. She had shown the most ardent appreciation and sympathy, until the princess spoke. Then, abruptly, she sat up straight, and she looked cold and indifferent throughout the remainder of the act.

When the final curtain had descended, the applause was deafening. Canes, heels, palms, and throats resounded as the actors made their bows together and individually. The poet, healthily risen from the dead, and the princess, simpering and very unlike a sister of mercy, smiled their thanks. And then

came the call "Piotrovski! Author Piotrovski!" until the curtain went up once more, disclosing the company in a line, with Piotrovski in the centre, between the poet and the princess.

Leading La Gioconde, who had played the poet, to the front of the stage, he bowed to her. He did it simply, as though he were saying: "Thank you so much, but why do you call for me? It is La Gioconde who creates the rôle."

The house thundered its call for a speech. But, with a helpless, naïve expression, he said "*Merci*" with his lips, bowed again to La Gioconde, and the curtain went down. Afterward, to his chagrin, he remembered that he had involuntarily looked up for the particular applause of two white-gloved hands. But in the box at the right, the only feminine hands that were clapping were sombrely encased in black.

"Why do I think of her?" he asked himself, and irritably thrust the thought out of mind.

He hurried back into the corridor of the dressing rooms to say some words of thanks and appreciation to those who had taken part in the performance, after which he joined his friends, who were waiting in the lobby. All the audience had gone, so there was no one to witness the way he was patted, and applauded—even hugged by Charante, who then rushed off to get his "copy" into the office of his paper. At last, Verney, Bluet, Little Smith, and Piotrovski got into one fiacre. Verney gave an address. Piotrovski, unstrung after the long strain of rehearsals and performance, asked, in alarm: "Where are you going, my friends?"

"Have you forgotten the Descharmes have a reception to-night? You promised the duke you would go."

"No, no, I am not going! I'm nervous and all in the air."

Following an impulse to escape, he made a move to get out of the carriage, but Verney held him in his ponderous grasp, while Little Smith broke in: "Your lady of the victoria is going to be there! I found *that* out!"

Piotrovski had no mind to go to the reception, but ceased struggling in the giant's grip, because it was easier to yield beneath the hold of Verney than to combat it, and he waited for a chance to dodge and bolt. Nevertheless, Little Smith's information fell like drops of water down a parched throat; Piotrovski absorbed it eagerly.

"The lady in question was at the play to-night, with the Montmorencys," Little Smith was saying. "I don't know many of the old faubourgs—they don't like Americans, as a rule, but De Navins knew them, so he went around in the second *entr'acte*, and was presented to— Would you like to know her name? Oh, well, if you don't care!" He shrugged his shoulders, in excellent imitation of a Frenchman. "She is not a native of France, for one thing! I'll give you that information, just out of good friendship—also this: She is a *Madame la Duchesse*, anyway, so you cannot fall in love and marry her."

"Listen to the little American," said Bluet banteringly, "to whom romance always is spelled m-a-r-r-i-a-g-e."

"Well, and what if it is?" Little Smith retorted, "Jan is not like you, you old *boulevardier*, with a twirl of your mustache and smile of the eye for every *grisette*! It is well to tell him, therefore, that his duchesse is not marriageable."

Bluet laughed good-humoredly, and Piotrovski interposed with more seriousness than the occasion seemed to call for: "I don't want to marry any one. Besides," he added abruptly, "I have a wife already."

This was received in awkward silence. Piotrovski's marriage was a subject tacitly understood in the circle around him as a matter for silence. As usual, Verney sprang into the breach.

"I beseech you, Jan, come to the reception with us! The duke is an old friend of yours, and has a right to be offended that you never go to his house. Come just for a time, won't you? I ask it seriously as a favor."

Put that way, Piotrovski saw no help for it but to yield.

CHAPTER III.

Between the old bronze gates of the house of the Duke Descharme, many carriages were passing. The fiacre containing the four friends had to be emptied quickly—a circumstance which would have given Piotrovski little chance of escape, even had he intended to protest further against coming. The arm of the giant linked in his own was also a compelling force, and he soon found himself ascending the curved stairway, upon the broad steps of which so many generations of celebrities and personages of fashion had mounted and descended.

There was a great crowd, and Piotrovski's small, brown, inconspicuous appearance allowed him, after greeting his host and hostess, to escape unobserved and find a seat hidden by plants, from which vantage he could watch the kaleidoscope without necessity to become an active part of it.

Piotrovski's aimless, yet restless, attention wandered from passing group to group.

A momentary thinning of the crowd revealed Verney talking to the Comtesse de la Tour, a fragile and beautiful woman, whose elegance and grace were suggestive of his unknown. Verney's thumb was making outlines on the atmosphere, and his rugged face was full of enthusiasm. Little Smith, now here, now there, was beaming. And with good reason, since he was one of the very few Americans who had ever been admitted to this famous old house. Furthermore, no one laughed at his accent or at his still more unpardonable confusion of genders, and his contagiously happy disposition met a reflected good humor on all sides.

But Piotrovski was not allowed to linger in his corner. As he was about to make a dash for the stairway in order to escape, his impulse was checked by a sudden glimpse of the slender outline of his unknown. She was within a few paces of him, talking to a famous minister. Again, just as in the carriage this afternoon, a perceptible animation overspread her features, and for a hes-

itating moment she seemed on the verge of a friendly acknowledgment; then she quickly looked away.

Piotrovski abandoned all thought of escape, and went eagerly in search of the duke. "Tell me, my friend, who is that lady in white? There—you can see her through the doorway—the lovely one talking with his excellency."

The duke raised his eyebrows. "But surely you know the Duchesse de Mar-sin. No? She is one of the most charming women in all Paris—you must be presented at once!" And he led the poet into the adjoining room.

In striking contrast to the feeling of irritation which other people had that evening produced in him, Piotrovski felt at once the sympathetic quality of her expression—felt it far more in close proximity than he had at a distance, and her friendly smile seemed to rob the introduction of formality.

"Monsieur Piotrovski," she said, "I am so glad to be able to tell you how much of your play to-night pleased me. Many scenes in it were truly beautiful."

Her voice enchanted him, and her subtly expressed qualification interested him. He had a distinct sense of gratitude that fate had for once made a realization fulfill the anticipation. "Tell me, I beg of you, the scenes you did not like!" he asked. He knew she had not liked the climax, but waited with some eagerness to hear if she would frankly say so.

She hesitated, as though deciding which of her thoughts she would give him, rather than as though she were gathering haphazard ones together hurriedly for the moment. "But it involves quite a discussion. It would not be fair to reel off, 'I like this' and 'I was disappointed in that,' without giving you the whole." Now came the radiant smile, and, under its influence, Piotrovski laughed joyously. His ill temper had fled at the sight of her!

"Then tell me 'the whole,'" he urged.

As though obeying a sudden impulse, yet one that she rapidly weighed, she answered: "Very well! But we must go and sit down. Yes, over here will

do. No, I will take this chair, so that I shall not face the room. So! I can think better."

For a few moments, she sat silent, in apparent contemplation of the feathers in her fan. Piotrovski was silently contemplating her. She had taken off her hat since the theatre, and he thought her more attractive without it. She wore her hair in an original way, that suited the contour of her small and well-shaped head. It was arranged with such finished simplicity as made the elaborate headdresses of other women look like upholstery—and casual hairdressing frumpy. The more Piotrovski observed her, the more she attracted him. He never wrote plays of modern times, and he had a habit in his imagination of transposing persons and events that came under his close observation into earlier periods. Because of this habit, perhaps, he had an impression at once that, under the finished Parisian poise, hers was a nature perfectly attuned to the primitive forces of the middle centuries. Yet she was in manner quite as much in harmony with to-day; she was, in fact, the quintessence of modernism.

"To begin with," she said finally, "your imagination is without boundaries. The mastery of diction is that of real genius." At the apparent fulsome-ness, Piotrovski felt instantly a threatening disillusion, but he was soon ashamed of himself as he heard her further. "But for your complete success there is, to my mind, one quality lacking. It is presumptuous of me to criticize, but you asked——"

"Yes, please!"

"Your characters are too often puppets or phantoms, particularly your women. Shall I say it—your great shortcoming? You can't draw a woman!"

She doubtless took Piotrovski's startled expression for disagreement, and stopped again, as though weighing her opinion carefully. Then she went on slowly and thoughtfully: "Yes, I am sure I am right. They are dream figures, your women. That is, when they are seen from a distance. When you

try to bring them close and put them in the centre of action, the dream film vanishes and exposes sculptures in clay instead. In neither case are they living. You write as a man who has dreamed vivid, beautiful visions; or at other times as a man who has studied every line of sculpture, but who has neither loved nor desired to love. You write of women from the head, not from the heart. You do not even observe them with sympathy. Their story is in a book whose pages you have never taken the trouble to read."

"Will you read it to me?"

There was a quick glimmer of displeasure in her eyes. "I was very serious."

"So am I."

At the earnestness of his expression her resentment faded, and she answered, merely doubtfully: "Impossible, monsieur, that a stranger could show you."

"That may be, madame, but I know you could, just as you perceive what the general public apparently does not, how much more I fail than I succeed when——"

His sentence was interrupted by the Comte de la Tour, who had been sent in search of her by old Madame de Broc, to whom the duchesse had promised a lift home. The duchesse got up, therefore, but turned again to Piotrovski. As though there were no doubt of his coming, she said:

"I am in Paris for two or three months. You will find me always between two and four—or for *déjeuner*? I hope you will sometimes come in for that—by and by, when we shall be friends!"

After she had gone, Piotrovski went in search of the Duke Descharme. Though they met but seldom, there had always been a pleasant sense of mutual understanding between them, and they now sat down together in a corner of the smoking room. Without prelude, apology, or even self-consciousness, Piotrovski asked: "She is not French, is she? I mean, of course, the Duchesse de Marsin."

"No, she is Hungarian." The duke,

observing Piotrovski's obviously eager curiosity, lit a cigarette, and settled himself as though to begin a long narrative. "She was born a Countess Szapary, and married the Duc de Marsin—about as bad a painter as his name was good. No—she is a widow. Her husband died five years ago. She is a curious woman, unusually brilliant and charming, with an extraordinarily exaggerated ideal of art, and an equal indifference to the pleasures and amusements of most beautiful women.

"I have always fancied—romantically, no doubt—that she had a mark of fatality about her, the shadow of something impending. Yet I don't think she has ever been awakened, as we say, to any very great emotion. Her husband's failure as an artist disappointed her bitterly, yet that can hardly be called an experience awakening to the heart. She was a mere child at the time of her marriage, a sensitive, half wild, yet over-cultivated little being—can you understand what I mean? In her, the extreme finish of the world was blended with the wildness of the woods. She was a daughter of both. Since her husband's death I have watched the change in her, the slow return to her true self. Every one wonders that she has not married again. Look where she will, she sees the light of admiration in men's faces, but she is indifferent to it all. Sometimes I have thought she would take the veil; there is the fanatical look of the religious in her. Yet she is a woman whose love, should she ever care for a man, would cease only with her soul's extinction."

Suddenly the duke broke off. Piotrovski had been so quietly absorbed in Descharme's narrative that the latter had said far more than he had intended. "I think I have told you her whole history," he added.

"All except what she does with herself, whom she lives with, and where she lives."

The duke laughed. "You are insatiable! She spends most of her time on an estate of her own in Hungary. For two or three months every year she occupies a small wing of the great De

Marsin house in Rue de l'Université. She is an accomplished musician, but seldom plays for any one. I can't think of any more, unless you want her age and genealogy, and those you can find in the 'Almanach de Gotha.'

Piotrovski laughed and thanked the duke with half-whimsical, half-genuine effusion. Shortly afterward he took his leave and started to walk home with Verney. They said nothing, and Piotrovski remained occupied with his own thoughts. He felt a distinct satisfaction in the news that the duchesse was a widow. He could not have explained why, for the merest suggestion of the possibility of a sentimental attachment would have been abhorrent to him. Ninety-nine men out of a hundred—especially Frenchmen—would have long since been speculating on a developing romance, but not Piotrovski. Undeniably there was a link that in some subtle way bound his fate with hers, but it was a link that was forged through neither her beauty nor her charm, nor any quality of her own attractiveness, but through his work, which was, after all, the vital part of him.

Finally Verney's voice broke in. "Jan," he said, "may I ask you a thing?"

"But of course, Paul, my friend. Ask what you will."

"Have you ever applied for a divorce?"

Piotrovski's shoulders moved as though shaking off something disagreeable. "No!" Then a little later he added, with simple finality: "I am a Catholic."

CHAPTER IV.

On the Avenue de Versailles, on the side toward the Seine, there stood a yellow-gray, inconspicuous, two-storied house. It had a front yard with a grass plot, divided precisely in half by a narrow pebble walk. There were evidences that the grass had been occasionally cut—the edge next to the walk was neatly trimmed; but no weeds or moss had ever been pulled, no grass or clover seed had been sown, no

flowers or shrubs planted. One straggly rose vine, which seemed in sheer persistence to have flourished in spite of neglect, clung tenaciously to the portico, reached farther up, and held open a shutter of the second story. All of the other shutters were closed. The façade was perfectly plain, and was flanked on either side by a wall which was as high as the first story. The house and its surroundings gave the effect of a habitation that has been tidied, just so far as is necessary to allow the inmates to go peacefully to sleep, rather than one that has been abandoned.

At about two o'clock of an afternoon shortly following the production of "Le Fidèle," the huge strides of Verney swung through the gate, and at his ring, a double one, the big right-hand door was flung open and the servant made way, as though to a member of the house returning rather than to a visitor entering.

"Is he busy?"

The servant inclined in assent, and in a subdued tone answered: "In the garden, M'sieur Verney. He has not even breakfasted. It is nearly three o'clock, but he was in one of his moods, you know, m'sieur. He will be faint with hunger, but I dare not interrupt to offer him anything. Will m'sieur enter?"

"Yes. I will wait a while in the library," Verney answered, in a voice almost as subdued as the servant's.

He entered the hall, which was more spacious than one would have supposed from the exterior, and turned to the right into a large room filled with a conglomeration of things that had probably been collected as they were needed, without consideration of the company they were to keep, and yet the room, as a whole, had an air of comfort that was not without distinction. A large triple window overlooked a garden scarcely more than twenty-five yards wide between the vine-covered walls that hedged it in, and perhaps a little over a hundred in length from house to river, but so laid out that it gave a remarkable effect of space. Carefully

placed conifers and shrubs, with occasional Italian statues or benches, deceptively extended the foreground, which was flanked with fruit trees against trellises and walls, while farther down, near the edge of the river, some fine old shade trees sheltered a low white summerhouse. A white-columned pergola, smothered in bloom, ran down to the water's edge. At one side, under an open circle in the pergola, midway between the little building and the river, was a sunken basin filled with lotus.

Verney, sitting on the balustrade of the little loggia upon which the windows opened, looked out at this charming spot, of which the street entrance of the house gave no promise save its silence. He was about to go indoors again when a bell sounded and a man's voice called "Léon!"

At once there was a bustle. A woman's voice, high and strident, gave an order, doors were heard to open and shut, there was a sound of running water and of kitchen utensils briskly handled. The manservant hurried through the garden in the direction of the summerhouse, and Verney, too, swung himself over the balcony railing and followed after.

In the summerhouse, amid papers scattered ankle deep, he found Piotrovski stretched at full length upon a bench—a narrow stone seat with a fox rug over it.

At the sight of Verney the poet half sat up, and limply let the weight of his arm fall in the hand of his friend. His exhaustion was evident in his labored breathing, in the strained, parched appearance of his lips, the blue shadows under his eyes. Presently he fell back again upon the bench, his head pillowed on his arm.

Verney sat down on the only other seat, a rush chair, and said nothing. He never interrupted Piotrovski's silences. He took his pipe out of his pocket, lit it, and sat smoking. The servant reappeared, bringing a little table set for breakfast.

"Put a place for Monsieur Verney," Piotrovski spoke for the first time.

But Verney put up his hand in pro-

test. "No, thanks, I breakfasted hours ago."

"Is it so late?" Piotrovski asked, with listless indifference. Then, with sudden intensity: "I have been trying to get it, trying my utmost since five this morning. But the more I try to visualize *Ysulinde* at the moment when her husband announces his sale of her, the more she eludes me. Look at these pages! She acts like an automaton and talks like a tract!"

Verney glanced through the numerous freshly written sheets, then tried to speak lightly:

"You are too tired to judge of your own work, my friend. You are overstrained, that's all. Come along, eat some breakfast, and then we'll go for a walk."

It was like Verney to show his sympathy in action, rather than by much speech. He crossed over to Piotrovski and raised him up, poured out a cup of coffee, spread a roll with butter, and then practically fed him. Piotrovski ate as though unconscious of what he was doing.

Finally he burst out vehemently: "It ought to be simple to understand the anguish that a woman of devoted, loyal nature would undergo at the moment she found her love had been bartered to dishonor! There is nothing intricate or difficult in a situation so vividly dramatic. Yet, when I come to put her outraged feeling into words, when I try to catch and hold one single phrase, one single gesture, the whole scene fades as a dream in the morning light."

He dropped his chin from his hands. "I am only a mediocrity, Paul! I am a rhymster—nothing better." His mouth curled contemptuously. "I had better realize my *métier* and write jingles and verses for the poet's column of the daily newspapers."

Verney's expression was anxious enough, but he answered with brusque pretense of impatience: "You are talking like a child. Go away for a change and think of something else. You need new experiences and fresh scenes. Why not start for Asia or Africa? The farther off the better. If you'll

wait until I have finished my group, I will go with you!"

Apparently the other did not even hear, for he continued, quite as though Verney had not spoken: "Lais, Tullia, Margorida, Arixène were all unreal, and now—Ysulinde!"

This time Verney's thoughts could with safety be expressed, and he made the most of them:

"I am losing patience with you! Every one whose work is creative must run into periods of inefficiency, even unproductivity. In such phases you have my sympathy, but you are getting morbid on the subject of your women. No one else knows about the failures you are harping on—they can't be very bad!"

"Some one else does."

Verney's eyes were raised in interrogation.

Piotrovski finished his coffee gloomily, then replied with conviction: "The Duchesse de Marsin is one, at least, who not only knows, but has spoken to me. Something she said set me to thinking—I wonder if the human element is lacking in me. I think that is what she meant. It is true I have none of the desire that other men have for love, for family, for home. I have been thinking a lot about this lack in me, or whatever you might call it, and I wonder if it is not a phase, or an example, of our national weakness; if its origin is, perhaps, not in my own little being, but in our whole race, if my futile characterization, my incapacity for passing a certain point is not all part of the unproductive Slav that Sienkiewicz has pointed out."

Verney tried to brace him. "Non-sense! You are half sick and imagine flaws because your unfortunate marriage has disturbed the clay for a while, and you must wait until the potter begins a new shape."

Piotrovski jumped up. Unaccountable excitement overcoming his fatigue, he paced the small apartment a dozen times. At length, he exclaimed:

"The Duchesse de Marsin fills my mind. I wonder why." He came back again to Verney. "There is no need of

your skeptical smile; you should know me better. The power of loving is left out of me." Then, bitterly: "I would it were left out of women! Passion I know, as a swinging of the pendulum in reaction from long mental effort—but don't let's speak of that; it is a thing loathsome and hideous—a profanation of love. That I feel an interest in the duchesse, I grant you, but it is an interest entirely of the brain. I feel no throbbing of the heart, I have no loss of sleep through thinking of her, and"—he laughed—"no lack of appetite!"

"Humph!" grunted the giant. "Symptoms vary. Sometimes it begins with fever, sometimes with rash, again with buzzings in the head."

"What are you saying?"

"Nothing—I must go to the École. The prizes are to be given to my atelier to-morrow, and I have not yet decided upon the awards. Come with me, for the walk. It will do you good."

In fifteen minutes Piotrovski—he always got into his clothes like a whirlwind—had shaved, tubbed, and dressed. They strode across the Pont de Grenelles, through narrow streets, into the Place Dupleix, on past the École Militaire and the Invalides. After a while they turned into the Rue de l'Université.

Piotrovski's glance strayed to the farther side of the street, toward an iron railing with a high gate surmounted by an ancient coat of arms; and as they approached, his steps lagged sufficiently to enable him to have a good look into a garden beyond. Verney followed the direction of his eyes.

"Have you been to see her?" the latter asked.

"Not since the day after the reception, when we left our duty cards."

"Then you have not talked with her again?"

"No."

Nothing more was said until they reached the École des Beaux Arts. Here Piotrovski decided that he would walk on farther, until it should be time to go to the Café Royal. He started briskly down the street, keeping up the gait

for nearly fifty paces. Then he hesitated, stopped, and went back for a dozen steps or so, stopped, hesitated again, and finally strolled on, with the uncertainty of one who was at any time likely to change his direction, into the Rue de l'Université.

At the first of the iron gates, he glanced again at the open window of the left wing. Then, suddenly realizing that he was no better than an eavesdropper, he turned quickly to the driveway, and, walking to the main entrance of the central building, rang the bell.

Piotrovski by this time keenly regretted the impulse that had impelled him thus far, and had a violent desire to escape. The door was opened by a smart-looking footman, who announced: "Not at home."

The automatic announcement and the rigid figure of the servant blocking the doorway suddenly changed Piotrovski's longing to escape into a feeling of flatness and disappointment, as he felt in his pocket for a card. He had none.

"Does monsieur desire pencil and paper?"

He was about to accept the writing tablet which the servant proffered him, when the current of air through the opened door wafted out a faint but unmistakable fragrance. His mood swung instantly back again to the impulse of escape. Hurriedly declining the tablet, he turned to go.

"What name shall I say, monsieur?" the footman insisted.

Piotrovski mumbled his name, as he made for the outer door. And once outside, he walked the streets of Paris briskly for at least an hour.

CHAPTER V.

The next day Piotrovski received this note:

DEAR MONSIEUR: My aunt and I were sorry to miss you this afternoon. Will you breakfast with us to-morrow, at twelve o'clock? My aunt is anxious to make reparation for my criticisms, so I warn you—wear very large pockets to hold her praises. Until to-morrow, I hope.

VERA DE MARSIN.

Piotrovski sat half dreamily contem-

plating the note in his hand. There was at least one thing of which he was certain; any tendency to drift on the sea of sentiment should drop anchor at the start; not so much to keep him out of the way of disagreeable flot-sam himself—he had always escaped from entanglements, he colored even as the recollections forced themselves upon his mind—as because he felt he ought to avoid any uncertain current for her.

As though to put his resolve into practice, he drew his chair up to the desk, wrote a note of regret, addressed and sealed it. No sooner had he done this than he was sorry. After all, was not his concern for her possible pain an act of presumption on his part? What right had he to suppose that his destroying impulses should ever have power to affect the fate of a woman such as she?

He thereupon tore up his first answer, and wrote a second, saying that he would breakfast with pleasure, and sent it off by messenger.

But the next morning there was a great stir at his door. A woman's voice clamored loudly. Whether it was forbidden, made no matter! She insisted upon seeing monsieur!

Piotrovski, this morning at work in the library, could not but hear, and went out into the hall to see what the commotion meant. He recognized Sophie, a little grisette of the quarter, who looked after Verney's studio.

At the sight of him she burst into tears. Monsieur Verney was sick. So very sick! She was sure he was dying! She threw her apron over her head and lamented stormily. Piotrovski asked questions, but her feelings were too tempestuous to allow of anything except her vociferous repetition that Verney was dying. Piotrovski called a fiacre, put Sophie in it, got in after her, and they galloped toward the bedside of the sick sculptor.

By the time they had skirted the Hôtel des Invalides, she had subsided sufficiently to give an account of what had happened. It seemed she had gone in as usual to take M'sieur Verney's cof-

fee, and found his room still dark. She was about to wake him, but then, she thought, the poor man had been working too hard of late, and she would let him sleep. But after a little while, Lizette, his model, who had been engaged to sit at eight o'clock, came down to the kitchen. Lizette thought his sleeping so late was very strange, so together they went upstairs again. Lizette went first and pushed his shoulder gently. He did not move, she leaned over to look at him. *Mon Dieu!* Her screams brought Sophie running. Together they turned him over. They thought he was dead, but no, he breathed. While Lizette telephoned for the doctor, Sophie had run to fetch his friend.

The fiacre turned into the Rue des Saints-Pères, and then again through a first into a second courtyard, upon which Verney's studio opened. Piotrovski paid the cabman and sprang across the sill of the door, broad like that of a barn, which led directly into a huge barracks of a place, filled untidily with fragments and half finished pieces of sculpture. A crooked little staircase ascended to a couple of rooms above, where, out of the chalk and marble dust and wax, Verney lived.

Piotrovski hurried through the atelier, rubbing his coat white on various protruding objects of plaster, stumbled, in his haste up the crooked stairs, thereby chalking trousers to match his coat, and into the room, where, on a cot that threatened to collapse under his contortions, lay the giant, moaning. The doctor was leaning over him on one side, while Lizette—still dressed for the figure of Ceres, in a couple of metres of crinkled cheesecloth, her hair beautifully banded with what had once been white cotton curtain cords—hovered anxiously on the other. It was a case of poisoning. He loved *marines-vertes*, and it was June. But he was better now. He must have nothing but camomile, the doctor said. Lizette, in her haste to be of use, started off down the stairs before it occurred to her that even the quarter was not exactly used to comely females wandering about the

streets with only their hair beautifully dressed. She snatched a blue cotton covering off one of the plaster figures, wrapped herself in it, and, the conventions thus being observed, out she ran to the apothecary for camomile.

After a while the invalid grew better, and the excitement subsided, but Piotrovski remembered the Duchesse de Marsin's breakfast only after the hour was long past. Aside from his rudeness in having sent her no word, he felt unaccountably annoyed at the thought that she had perhaps seen him pass her house, and with Sophie. Then his instinct of apprehensiveness of the day before came back, and his mood changed. If the duchesse thought that he had deliberately chosen to go off with a grisette—it was, perhaps, just as well! The outlook was threatening, and fate was wise. Nevertheless, common civility demanded that he send a note. Inconsistently he wrote, therefore:

My friend, Paul Verney, is suddenly ill. A thousand regrets and half as many apologies. When he is better, I shall present myself at your house to pray your indulgence.

PIOTROVSKI.

And notwithstanding his recent welcoming of the all-wise fate that seemed ready to intervene, her answer, which was brought in a short time, made a feeling of warmth steal over his heart.

MONSIEUR: I saw you pass, and feared, from your expression of anxiety, that the *bonne* of a friend had fetched you on a grave affair. I hope Monsieur Verney will be on the mend shortly. If there is anything I, or my cook, can prepare for him, tell me. I shall be anxious for your news, and glad to receive you at whatever hour you come.

V. DE MARSIN.

By the afternoon Verney, though still weak, was so far recovered that there was nothing further to fear, and Piotrovski betook himself to the De Marsin palace. He was received quite as a friend by the concierge, who said, with a confident manner, that Madame la Duchesse had left word to admit M'sieur Piotrovski when he should come. The little bell having tinkled, he was ushered by the automatic footman through a small antechamber of white,

with very little furniture to crowd the limited space, into the room through the open window of which he had previously caught an alluring glimpse.

Presently she appeared. Her dress was, as usual, of white, its length of skirt falling in folds around her feet; yet she walked easily and gracefully, without the threatening effect of stumbling common to most of those who wear this barbarity of modern fashion. She held out her hand with the manner that one has with a friend whom one sees frequently, and Piotrovski kissed it as though he were unconsciously following an inclination rather than observing a formality that convention decreed.

"And Verney?" she asked.

"Better, thanks. Everything is going well now; but he gave me a fright! I think I scarcely realized before how much he is to me."

"But now he has his little *femme de ménage* watching over him, so you may be tranquil if you hear no news." Then she added, smiling: "She will take every care of him, for she is a good girl. Besides, she adores him—like a faithful, good dog, you understand!"

Piotrovski stared, and then he laughed. "One would think you had second sight, madame. I cannot help wondering how you know Sophie."

She laughed delightedly, "Ah, see! I was right! Perhaps one day I will tell you how I know. It is, after all, very simple."

They talked for a while on a variety of subjects, and then he held out to her the violin. She took it without protest, quite as a matter of course, and placed it against her throat, but with her right arm hanging limply at her side. Then her eyes half closed, and after a moment she lifted the bow. She played a Hungarian lullaby, a simple melody that Piotrovski knew well; but in her interpretation he felt a rhythm that suggested the swaying of tree branches by the wind blowing on a hillside. The pastoral feeling that she put into it was extraordinary. Then all at once she urged her melody into a rapid, vibrant air, as though the calm hillside had sud-

denly opened into the crater of a volcano.

Piotrovski felt the blood surge to his heart; he stared, amazed, at this exquisite, cool, fragrant, irreproachable woman of the world, who, from some hidden corner of her soul, could produce the most sensuous, pulse-disturbing music imaginable. Yet, still her face remained impenetrably calm, her eyes closed. He wondered if she even knew how she played. Or was the song the manifestation of some inexplicable force, merely singing through her, while she herself was unconscious of its effect? More vividly than ever persisted the mad idea that she was in some way the unconscious medium who might bring about the fulfillment of his own gifts. Only such a woman as she, a woman of her feeling, her dignity, her power, placed in a situation like that of *Ysulinde*, the gambler's wife in the great last scene of his tragedy—

He turned red with shame, and thrust the thought out of mind. In the same instant the music ended with a sudden break, her eyes opened, and a flash of the music's madness gleamed between her lashes. But the next moment their glance met his so tranquilly that it seemed as though his overstrained imagination had been playing him tricks. He hardly knew which trait of her personality most excited his interest and admiration—her flexibility or her control, her fire or her coldness, her vivid, brilliant smile, or her sombre, fateful eyes. After this she played a song of Chopin's. But now it was the woman of the world who played, the pupil who had studied technique under the best masters. To her very finger tips she was the Parisian in whose adamantine polish there was no flaw, and who was deliberately, though graciously, turning the side toward her visitor which she chose that he should see.

CHAPTER VI.

The Princess Mitzka, counting "eighty-nine, ninety!" set the worsted on her needle to begin a new afghan. Then she knitted the first row carefully,

after which she paid no further attention to her work, and her needles clicked on as mechanically and evenly as the clock.

When a young girl she had been betrothed to an Austrian officer, who died on the day they were to be married, and all her life she had remained faithful to his memory, living in a dream world of her own and enshrining therein her ideal of love and romance. She took the keenest interest in all young married people; especially in their babies, for whom she had unceasingly, during twenty years, knitted socks, jackets, and afghans. In fact, she had established herself as a sort of universal "aunt" to the entire country surrounding her home. Upon the death of the Duc de Marsin she had come by the first train to her niece, and except for short absences had been with her ever since.

She was at this moment sitting by the open window of the salon in the Rue de l'Université.

At five o'clock a servant entered, and set a table directly before her with a large silver tray containing sweet drinks, tea, biscuits, and cakes. The princess laid aside her knitting and took a glass of orangeade and a sweet biscuit, exactly like a good little girl who has had her supper put before her. As she took a second mouthful, a carriage rolled into the driveway, and in a few moments the Duchesse de Marsin entered through the long window from the garden. She nodded, with a smile, to the princess, crossed over to the table, and drank a whole glass of sugared water down at one draught.

"That is good—I was so thirsty! Ah, but it is hot! You did right, dear aunt, to stay indoors; it feels quite cool here, which I assure you it is not in the streets."

Then more leisurely she poured herself a small cup of tea, drew a chair close up to her aunt, and sat down. The princess let her knitting rest on her lap. It was evident that she listened with eager attention—not that she waited for any especial news, but her mind being almost always unencumbered with

thoughts of its own, she delighted in hearing even the most trivial affairs of others.

The duchesse stirred her tea. "I went to the Salon," she explained. "Daubs, for the most part, though, of course, there were some good things. A portrait by Sargent was marvelous! And there was a picture by Bluet—I went back to it again and again!" She helped herself to a pastry and then said casually: "The first thing to-morrow morning you must go and buy it!"

"I?" the princess exclaimed, in mild astonishment, but without a sign of protest.

Her niece paid no attention to the question. "It is the most noticeable canvas at the Salon—at least, I thought so. It is called 'The Poet.' It is the picture of a Breton peasant sitting on a bleak stretch of sand and looking out to sea. The catalogue gives merely its title, but I am sure Piotrovski sat for it, although there is more suggestion of his spirit than of his actual features."

"And you want me to buy it? But what shall I do with it?"

The duchesse laughed. "Not really, my aunt; but I do not want my name given. Do you see?"

The princess saw, best of all, that she was being let into a secret—one of those small stratagems that so appeal to children—and Vera's needing her help so pleased her that for the moment it prevented even the forming of an opinion.

The duchesse suddenly noticed a tray full of visitors' cards.

"Who has been here?" She picked them up eagerly and looked through them as she spoke; then put them back listlessly. "Nobody," she said half absently. "Was there no one else?"

"But Vera, dear! How many visitors do you want? I had been thinking it was quite a reception day! And you say no one!"

The duchesse shrugged her shoulders. "Did you see them?"

"I saw only Madame de Broc and Madame de Pierrefonds. The others all came while I was having my nap. Madame de Pierrefonds says you must take the flower booth at the bazaar.

She won't take no for an answer. Madame de Broc was really chagrined that you were not at her ball last night—she came to see if you were ill. She entreated me to make you go out more. Every one wants to know what you do with yourself. You have hardly been to a ball this season."

"Am I to dance on and on, like the stepmother at Snow White's wedding? I am no longer a young girl—to live for the wearing out of dancing shoes—three pairs a week! Should you like me to be like poor old Baronne Blanc, struggling madly for the left-over crumbs of attention that the young and beautiful women let fall?"

The princess looked aghast. "Vera! How can you talk like that, you who are so beautiful, so wonderful, so accomplished?" The old lady was almost in tears.

The duchesse laughed merrily, then suddenly her expression softened to tenderness, "Dear aunt! Could I be but a small part of what your affection pictures me! But seriously, you know how little the general world of society interests me. Small dinners and parties among real friends are one thing, but a great crush such as the Pierrefonds' last night—oh, no!"

"You had a beautiful time at the Chalines', didn't you?"

"Yes—you dear, you!" The duchesse smiled. "But that was because I met Captain Lechborne, just back from the Soudan. I also had an enchanting evening in the same house a month ago. I like to go to the Chalines'."

She got up, took off her hat, and picked up her violin and began, as though quite absent-minded, to play a dirge. The corners of the princess' mouth went down in prompt sympathetic depression. Vera stopped playing and looked at the rug. After a while, she said slowly:

"By the way"—there was the barest shade of evasion and of excitement as she added this—"I saw Verney and Piotrovski for a moment at the Salon and asked them to dine with us to-night. At first, they declined. They, it seems, were dining with Bluet and Charante,

and the editor of the *Revue du Monde*, and they said they did not suppose we would want them all. I said, of course, we did. Piotrovski was quite amusing, and said I was lucky to get only four, as their usual number was six. I said I regretted that we were to see only four. Piotrovski thereupon accepted in the name of all six for the first evening I could name. Verney got quite embarrassed, but Piotrovski laughed aloud." She sounded a bell, and then came over and sat on the footstool at her aunt's knees. Her voice rang joyously. "At all events, four of the greatest celebrities in Paris are coming to dine with—just you and me. Why go out into a crush of nondescripts when we have the most splendid society imaginable all by ourselves here at home?"

She told the footman who answered the bell that there would be six at dinner. Then she went back to the description of the Salon. "I did not tell you, did I? Verney's statue of Pan is of Piotrovski, too."

The princess looked suddenly troubled as she asked with gentle alarm: "Vera, isn't Monsieur Piotrovski married?"

"I believe he is. There is some mystery about his wife, but either I have never heard, or else I have forgotten what it is. He has not told me. After all, why should he?"

The princess' troubled expression was tinged with an old-maid's sentiment. "The first thing you know, he will be in love with you, poor man! You should think of that, my dear!"

Unaccountably, Vera flushed. "There is very little danger—for him!" she added in a curiously subdued voice.

Piotrovski! Piotrovski! Her mind echoed the name; take up what subject she would, her thoughts circled around him! She hated her evasions, yet she had been unable to take up her narrative in sequence. Three times she had tried to announce his coming to dinner before she had succeeded in pronouncing the words, and after describing Bluet's picture she was utterly unable to tell the princess about Verney's statue, although she was thinking of it all the

time. She shut her thoughts in now, behind closed eyes, and played—until the princess was almost ready to cry out—exercises.

CHAPTER VII.

The friendship between Piotrovski and the duchesse developed so rapidly that they soon drifted into the habit of seeing each other almost daily. Yet instead of the plunge into unreserved confidences usual to most people in their situation of mutual sympathy, they scarcely ever talked personalities. The duchesse, in particular, though quite candid in expressing her thoughts, very seldom mentioned personal experiences. Occasionally she said, "My brother Imre has written," and once she showed him a scrap of paper all covered with the generous scribbling of a pencil guided by a little child's hand. There was a light in her eyes that he had never seen before as she said: "It is from my baby—Tanya. She has learned to make X's, the darling!"

"Your baby!" A sense of loss suddenly caught Piotrovski, as though their friendship had been a pretense merely and she had kept from him the real side of herself.

"No." The regret in her tone was unmistakable. "Not my own baby—I never had any of my own."

Occasionally, like this, she gave some clue to her feelings, and out of an impression here and its confirmation there, Piotrovski gathered an estimate that accorded with his first impression of her. She had a great heart, a great faith, and the truth of her was as profound as the shadow look in her eyes.

As the friendship had grown between Piotrovski and the duchesse, Verney, too, began to go quite frequently to the Rue de l'Université. Toward the end of June the Princess Mitzka, the duchesse, and Verney lunched with Piotrovski. It was the first time the duchesse had ever seen his house and garden, and after luncheon he showed her about with the evident joy of a child displaying his treasures to a playmate who is sure to appreciate them as much as him-

self. Verney, in the regulation rôle of friend, was trying his best to interest the Princess Mitzka. A collection of old firearms was his haphazard selection for a theme—a lecture really delivered, quite as though it were addressed to his pupils at the Beaux Arts. He explained how the powder was rammed down the barrel and lighted by the flint.

"Yes? And it goes right off? Ah, yes, how very interesting!" Then with a glimmer of inspiration, she asked: "The little stones make the fire, is that it?"

"That's it exactly," Verney's wide-apart eyes smiled encouragement.

The princess smiled in return. "I wonder," she observed confidently, "why they did not use a match?"

Suddenly she asked Verney's advice—she was always asking advice, a habit which often led to confusion when she tried to follow simultaneously that of several contradictory counselors. She now wondered whether she had better take a train earlier on Saturday so as not to have to travel on Sunday. And out of this meagre material they found that by a little turning and twisting they made conversation very well.

To Piotrovski and Vera, on the other hand, the moments went skimming by as softly and as perfectly as a summer breeze. They had gone out into the garden, and sat down on the rim of the lotus pool. The little fountain splashed softly upon the ever-thirsty flowers, and filled the wide leaf rings to the brim. The sun shone through the vines of the pergola, and made golden patches over the duchesse's cream-colored cloth dress, and displayed the exquisite whiteness of her skin—with not a bit of powder on it—and flecked with coppery glints the fine hairs about her temples.

For the first time she had let down the barriers of her habitual reticence and talked of herself. "I remember when I was a child," she was saying, "I used to think that when I grew up I would be famous. Above all, I wanted to be a great composer. I never told any one—because I cared really, and could not bear to have what was so

serious to me ridiculed. But it was never out of my mind." Her smile was half reminiscent, half amused, as of one who with sympathy remembers past failures that no longer hurt. "I could not grasp, then, the difference between mechanical and creative work. It took years of failure to realize it fully. No, I understand my own ability thoroughly—my own limitations. I have a true musical ear and a good memory; I can play almost anything after having heard it once. But I have not a spark—not one—of the creative gift." She half shut her eyes. "I wonder if all people worship genius as I do? To me it is the one human attribute that is immortal—no, there are two, genius and love. But I put genius first—even though I am a woman."

Piotrovski's quick sympathy understood. "I don't believe," he said, "that there can be appreciation without experience. You understand the creative temperament too well to be without it yourself; for some reason you have not found a means of expression—that is all. Nothing is given without reason; your ambition is not at all of the ordinary, a force like that can't be unproductive entirely; there would be no order in the world otherwise."

She shook her head, but, even as she did so, the wonted radiance came fully into her smile.

"My grandfather, who was a very silent man, used to say: 'What would eloquence avail if there were no listeners?' And in that maxim is my comfort. What would be the use of achievement in art, if there were none to appreciate it? Artists, of course, admire the creations of fellow artists, but I don't think a rival's enjoyment can ever be the same as that of one who is merely a lover, and not a creator, of the beautiful. I am sure if I could compose I should not have the same feeling of personal possession in another's music that I have now."

"I remember, when my husband was painting"—She hesitated, and then went on, with some evidence of effort, as though she were suddenly determined, now that she had begun, to show

Piotrovski the whole of her castle, to take him into the buried dungeons as well as the state apartments. "For a long time, at first, in my ignorance, I believed in his new school of art. I felt that purple women and pink cows were something I had to learn to appreciate. And when I found I couldn't, and began coolly to estimate not only his work but his attitude toward it, the disillusion I felt seemed to spread over every one. I imagined all artists to be shallow egotists, strutting about in queer clothes and trying to cultivate some eccentric pose, and for the most part wasting their time and canvas." Again the faintly hesitant quality came into her voice. "It has meant more to me than you probably imagine—just to know what such men as you, and Verney, and Bluet, are accomplishing. And now, to feel that I even have a place in your friendship—it is quite wonderful!" She sprang up lightly, as though to counteract the effect of her mood, verging too nearly on the emotional.

"Look at that lumbering bumblebee!" She pointed whimsically. "Buzzing nosily, making all the fuss, and close beside him the little honeybee. She has no time to stop and sing a tune. See, her little baskets are nearly full of gold!" She straightened up, took a deep breath, threw her small head back, and laughed a happy, delicious laugh of pure joyousness. "Oh, what a beautiful day! A glorious day in a glorious world! I'm glad—just to be alive. Aren't you?"

Piotrovski laughed like a boy. "It's an adorable hour, of an adorable day, and I exult to be alive! I do!"

And then they walked up through the pergola to the little summerhouse. In their regard for each other there was a new feeling—of understanding, of intimacy; and as he led her into the summerhouse he was conscious of an impelling desire not only to show her, but to share with her, his things; to put her in the centre of his household gods, to surround her with everything that, until that moment, had been exclusively, debarringly his.

"You see, when the weather is good

I work here. Sit here in my chair, so you can get my view up the river. Don't you like my vista of flowers and this glimpse of the lotus pool? I very much like my lotus pool—color, fragrance, form; the drops of water falling, falling in even cadence, in ever-renewing freshness; it is all full of the imagery of the East. You would never suppose, would you, that the heart of Paris could be so near?"

He chattered on, drifting along the mood of the moment, just as a small boy drifts happily down a running stream on a summer holiday morning. He did not try to check his mood's most trivial turning, although he knew instinctively that his every impulse must be obvious to the duchesse.

"See what a good nib my pen has!" he said boyishly. "I write on this sort of paper."

Using his pen, she wrote a line at random.

He was quite right in his divination; she knew, as well as though she had been told in words, that ordinarily he hated to have any one use these very things that he was urging upon her. And she looked at him as a woman is wont to look when the man who interests her most of all the world, unbars a little inner gate of his castle to let her enter a private apartment that is not opened to any one else. How does she know? How does a plant know when it is springtime?

On his desk was a miniature. Even in the soft painting of the face she thought a Spartan hardness was suggested; yet the features were like Piotrovski's. "It was my mother," he told her. "Painted by Lebnitz when she was a bride." He looked at it sadly. "What a cruel thing it was that she who most loved me—" He broke off. "My poor mother, had she only understood me, might have guided—and yet, perhaps not!"

Piotrovski had become grave. He seated himself on the table, folded his arms, and for some moments sat silent, looking down steadily at the duchesse. The latter looked up without interrogation, but with her entire attention.

"For some time," he said at last, "I have begun, in my own mind, if not aloud to you, to call you my friend. Therefore, I have determined to tell you certain things. You may know them, but I think you ought to hear them from me—not that I presume to think my story will be a revelation; a woman of your worldly knowledge and position and beauty can certainly judge of the race of men well enough to estimate me—yet there are facts which we should be children to ignore. We are becoming friends, we are approaching nearer and nearer the inner gardens of each other's lives, and in mine there are some dark pits that it would not be honest of me to let you stumble upon unaware. I must show them in all their ugliness. Then it shall be for you to decide whether you shall choose to come into the garden, knowing, yet ignoring them, or whether you shall go quickly away and leave it and me abandoned."

He spoke with unusual slowness—as a rule he talked rapidly—and he looked directly and sombrely at her. "I am going to make a clean breast of it to you—my only effort shall be to be truthful. Well, then! I have hurt every one who has ever liked me, I have crippled every one who has tried to lean upon me, I have broken the heart of every soul that has loved me."

The duchesse drew a short, quick breath, but her feelings, whatever they were, were hidden behind a mask. She looked at him quietly, like one of those rare friends who care, and understand, but who have no curiosity.

Piotrovski continued, finding his words carefully: "Verney is the only intimate friend I have ever kept. The other four—although we are known as inseparables—are not inmates of my inner gardens, they do not know, even, that they exist; they see me only superficially and when I am in a sufficiently amiable mood. And between them and me stands Verney—to keep them from knowing me as I am, to keep me from feeling their intrusion. Yet though I can bar my garden gates and lock myself in indefinitely, I have hurt even

their feelings time and time again. And I have hurt Verney infinitely more. That his and my friendship stands unimpaired is an evidence of the greatness of his loyalty—not mine. He knows I care for him as sincerely as I am capable of caring. He knows that ordinarily I would give him all that friendship could ask; but occasionally I get into a certain mood, and then I would refuse him a crust of bread, even though his life depended upon it. Even he, I am afraid, some day will demand something of me, and I will fail him in a way that will be impossible for him to forgive." He broke off. "You don't understand, do you? Nobody can."

"You mean if any one asks you for something, then you cannot give it?"

"No, no, that is not it. Ordinarily I am amiable enough; I am only too glad to do anything desired of me. But occasionally when a piece of work is shaping itself in my mind, it is as though something took possession of me, and I cannot control my own actions. To those who know me slightly, it is not apparent; I am all right with them, because they don't try to get through my barricade of manner, and don't try to know what is going on within me. It is *that* which makes me a fiend! There is no other word for it. Above all, I detest those who insist on trying to make me take a rest; or drink beef tea; or even dine on a certain day and at a fixed hour. I am really out of tune with my fellow men, and with women far more. Yet one or two of them have been ill-starred enough to love me, and many others have imagined they did."

Vera's instinct might have been to resent this last, had not his unconsciousness robbed it of all conceit. Obviously, Piotrovski was baring his very heart, without reserve, without extenuating pleas of any kind; he was turning the searchlight of self-examination into every corner without the least attempt to gloss over or to hide.

"The reason why certain women should fancy they love me is simple enough," he continued gloomily. "They

have too little to occupy their minds, and all of them want sympathy. I write something from my own soul, and it travels until it meets, and perhaps answers, the thoughts that have been struggling dumbly in the souls of others. That is natural. All human beings are affected more or less with the same hopes, doubts, longings, and despair. But those who read forget that a poet's pen is merely the instrument by which things greater and deeper than the conscious productions of his own puny mind find expression. A poet is a seer, a medium, a clairvoyant, or he has no right to the name. Yet those who read my books and see my plays forget that I have given them all the best of which my heart, and brain, and soul are capable, and that I, the man, am often mute and empty-hearted as they.

"Often I meet perfect strangers who tell me all the sorrows and secrets of their lives, because in this or that stanza I have expressed such and such a feeling that seems in accord with their own. Sometimes I have yielded to the moment's impulse of sympathy, but that, especially in the case of women, is fatal; inevitably it runs to sentimental relations of one sort or another, and in any event, they regard me as their own undisputed property, and that is the one thing I cannot endure from any one. Leave me alone, free and unhampered, and I will wander around after a kind person like a good animal, but slip a chain on me, and something within me surges up in rebellion, breaking everything in sight and injuring me as well.

"My mother ought to have understood me, but she did no better than the rest, or she would never have urged my marriage. No—I want to tell you about that, too, and then I shall let it alone. In the next estate to ours in Poland, there was a pretty girl. Her father and mine were great friends, our land adjoined, my mother was fond of her. People have said in my defense that my mother brought about the match, but that is not true, although she did encourage it. Her timidity fearing

that my irresponsibility might lead to wildness, she imagined, no doubt, that marriage would steady me. But all this is far from the point. The girl was quite attractive, a blonde, with wide blue eyes, a weak but pretty mouth, a plumply rounded figure, and skin that looked fresh and sweet. I tell you this to lead up to what follows.

"I cared nothing at all about her. Although I danced with her sometimes, and she came often to our house, it would have ended there had I not discovered that a neighbor's son—a lifelong friend of mine—was seriously in love with her, and that she was undoubtedly casting sheep's eyes, china doll's eyes, rather, in his direction. I saw him looking at her smooth, white throat, I saw him looking at her pretty mouth, and suddenly I was filled with a desire to make that throat and mouth my own. Not so much because I wanted to kiss them myself as to prevent his kissing them, and to let him know that I had the right to kiss them. Therefore, while he, with the diffidence of the heart that cares, was making slow progress in his suit, shyly taking a faltering step, and then in fear and awe retreating again, I, with the sudden action of capricious passion and real heart's coldness, kissed her! She struggled a little, blushed a lot, and then kissed me back again.

"I was very young, and the mysterious force of physical emotion deluded me, no less than it has millions of others, into a fancied love. So much so, that I even partially succeeded in excusing to myself the treachery to my friend by calling it the 'decree of fate,' and all that sort of thing. I considered it a return to primeval times. Might was right. He had been a dullard weakling, and I, as a reward of dashing prowess, had carried off the prize.

"We were soon married, my unsuccessful rival left the country, and I thought no more about him. Aside from the dastardly motive that made me take the first step, the prospect of my marriage did not promise so badly. I imagined myself much in love, and my wife, I think, really cared for me, but

that did not prevent her from soon finding me impossible, and trying to make me into the conventional type of husband. She became overdemonstrative one moment, exacting the next, and I became proportionately chilled and bad tempered. I cannot bear to be disturbed when I work. If people interrupt me, I am resentful, and not only for the moment—I never forgive them for it. I explained as often as I could, and as clearly, that when I was locked up in my room, no matter what happened, I would not be spoken to. So then she used to come to the door, tap softly, and *whisper!* As if it made any difference whether she scratched softly on the panel or beat the door down! Continually she cried and cast reproachful looks at me.

Piotrovski sat perfectly still all this time, with his arms folded, speaking in a low, but distinct voice, and with very little emphasis.

"Of course, in the failure of our marriage, she was in no way to blame. She was created for domestic happiness, and she has been robbed of the right of wifehood, and the joy of motherhood. Fate, with blindness of justice, has allowed her to be the sufferer in every way, while I, the offender, have escaped free. Yet I was powerless to do differently; everything she needed, I lacked; everything I could not tolerate, she became. It was a case of utter incompatibility for both of us. Had she been married to a good man, fond of his home—best of all, a farmer—she and he would have been perfectly happy. They would have been interested together in every detail of house and farm; they would have minutely figured profit and expenditure, down to the smallest *polushka*, and read them over each time there was nothing to talk about!

"But as for me, at the very mention of accounts I felt as though I had a fever. I hated all detail and regularity, but that was not the worst of it—most of all I hated repetition. I could stand almost anything the first time, the second time was hard to bear, and the third was impossible. In less than three

months after my marriage, I hated my wife, my house, my life, everything, to such a degree that I was afraid of what violence I might do if I stayed any longer. So I left!

"Twice, after short periods of remorse and pity, I went back in a penitent and contrite frame of mind, with a full intention of making a model husband. The first time I stood it out with apparent amiability for over a month; the second time I stayed two days. That was six years ago. Had she cared less and let me alone, we might have got along passably, at least; but I am not a sturdy oak to bear the clinging of tender vines; I pulled that one up by the roots, and took all the air and sunshine for myself."

Piotrovski's lips curled disdainfully; he at last unfolded his arms, shrugged his shoulders, and stuffed his hands into his pockets. His voice had a grating sound in its staccato tones, as though he bit off the syllables.

"That is a charming history for a man who writes from the pure and lofty heights of romantic ideals, isn't it? No—nor is that all! You have heard the story of Madame X. It was a vulgar scandal, and it was madness for her to have testified as she did. My family and my friends tried to hush it. Only half the world believes, I am told—but"—he looked sullenly at the carpet—"every word of what she said about me was true. Then there are the other sort; I have not known many, but I deserted them, too. One in particular cared, and gave up a lot for me; I was fond of her, I was really—but I behaved no better to her than to the rest."

Suddenly the sharpness went out of his voice, and he spoke only dejectedly—sadly—with that quality of helpless appeal which catches the listener's sympathy and holds it, regardless of reason. He was as wistfully troubled as a child who has broken the toy he only wanted to play with.

"There is something wrong with me. I don't myself know what it is. Except in the original intention toward my wife, I have not been a cad, I have

not the instincts of a rake. My heart and mind are utterly absorbed in my work, until I am overtired, and then—well then, I go rather to pieces, emotionally. Impulses, not always of the best, get the better of me. Sometimes they hold me completely, but never for long. And each time I return to myself ashamed, and vowing more self-control in future. No, I am not a rake. I do not want entanglements; God knows I do not want to make conquests of good sort or bad; I want to go along peacefully without injuring any living thing, and yet—I have caused more hurt in comparison to my insignificant self than can be imagined. I have a quality—I don't know what it is—that makes people give me what I want. I have a quality of transient sympathy, a sympathy of instinct more than of reason, and therefore, like my character, undependable. I feel and care really for the time being, and then suddenly my mind grows restless and has to break away.

"I have told you I am not fit to associate with. And yet—it sounds trite; it is, I believe, what all men say—and yet, by the force of this confession, which I do not think is one that all men would make to the person whose opinion they are anxious to win, I ask you to believe me when I say that my friendship for you is not like anything that I have ever felt in my life before. Emotion and impulse had no part in its building, and, above all, I have wanted its foundation to be truth. That is why I have told you all this." He held out his hands, as he asked wistfully: "And now—do you go away and leave me, or do you stay my friend?"

For a long time there was silence; behind the smooth mask of the Duchesse de Marsin's expression there was no hint of her feeling. Through all his long confession she had not interrupted by a word. At last, and with some hesitation, as though she sought to convince him, but with little conviction herself, she said:

"Don't you think it might become possible for you to go back? You might find her a very different woman

now. No one could go through what she has suffered and remain unchanged. You—you ought to go back!"

Piotrovski jerked up his chin. "Never! Besides, even if I would, and if she were willing to have me, it is too late. She has abandoned the world and gone into a retreat." He paused and looked gloomily at the floor, then he added: "She was always very devout. I hope she may at least find peace in the life she has chosen."

"Would you quite say that she had chosen it? Forgive me, that was not kind! Especially, as I know you are telling me all this about yourself, not because you want to confide in some one, or any one, but because we have come to that fork in the road where your road is also mine."

He took her answer as a matter of course. "Yes, that is right." Then, after a moment, he asked: "What sort of road do you suppose we are to follow?"

She spread her hands out, but did not answer, and he continued instead:

"I wonder how we came to the cross-road? In fact, I wonder how our paths happened to meet at all? How was it that you remembered a chance man standing at the door of a railway carriage? Did I stare at you so impertinently that you could not but feel it? I am sure that is not true, for if I had, you would never have received me so kindly when I was presented to you."

She smiled and shook her head. "I can tell you easily. You appealed to me like a child in distress. 'I wish I might help him,' was what I thought."

And then, again with all the irresponsibility of a child that does not measure what it asks, with a child's complete forgetfulness of a subject that has been closed, he leaned suddenly toward her, his eyes beseeching, his lips slightly apart.

"Will you really help me? Ah, will you? I do need you! I need you as I have needed no one, in all my life, and yet every word that I have told you is true, my crying need of you is true, but all the while—even now, in the presence of your dear personality—I feel an underlying instinct calling all that is

honest in me to warn you to beware! To warn you that in me there is much of the vampire! To warn you that I take from every one I meet—and give nothing in return!"

But what woman that ever lived listened to warnings given by others against the one man in the world to her? And when those warnings are uttered by his own lips, has a woman ever been known to believe, or, believing, to heed? Vera de Marsin was no exception to all the rest.

CHAPTER VIII.

The old Princess Mitzka had gone from Budapest to Baden-Baden. Spring had long ago turned into summer, but still the Duchesse de Marsin lingered in Paris. Finally, however, the urging letters of her family induced her to join them in Baden. She was going in her motor car, and in order to cover the distance in a one-day run, she was obliged to start at six o'clock in the morning. Yet, even at this unreasonable hour, both Piotrovski and Verney came to see her off. They had helped put her belongings into her car, and just as all was ready, her maid in front with the chauffeur, her valises strapped on behind, Piotrovski exclaimed half whimsically:

"I don't want you to go—alone!"

"Here is plenty of room!" Smiling, she motioned to the wide, half-empty seat.

"I will! *Parbleu*, yes!" And with that he sprang into the car and took his place beside her. Both he and the duchesse laughed, and he called back to Verney as the machine started: "Send Léon with my things to the—are you going to the *Stéphanie*?—send my things to the *Europe*!" And away they went.

No one could have been more surprised at the impulse he had followed than Piotrovski himself. Baden had no particular attraction for him, and in all probability he would be able to see very little of the duchesse. Her family were all to be there, and she would naturally

be forced into an active social life in which he had little part. The idea of his folly occurred to him before they had passed the fortifications, but he shrugged his shoulders. After all, why worry about what might happen when they got there? In the meantime, he had a long, glad, joyous day that must run well into evening before they could even arrive.

They breakfasted on coffee in a thermos bottle, crescent rolls, and honey. All the while the car was going, and the coffee threatened to spill, and the honey stuck to everything it could, and the crescents would crumb over the floor. But they lunched on chicken, cheese, and Bar-le-duc jelly, at a little village an hour beyond Châlons; they dined on trout, lettuce, and pâté de foie gras, at a chalet perched on the side of the Vosges Mountains, and they arrived finally amid the glory of a full moon, which to Piotrovski, in spite of his earlier optimism, seemed emblematical of dark hours to follow. He left her at the door of the Stéphanie, and betook himself dejectedly to the Hotel Europe.

The *portier* of the Stéphanie had welcomed the duchesse with that inimitable manner of obsequious dignity and that personal pride in being on conversational terms with "our" nobility characteristic of European servants. The "conversation" was chiefly to the effect that the illustrious Szapary family was occupying the same apartment they were in the habit of having.

The duchesse crossed the hall, and, declining the lift, ascended the wide stairway. After walking a short distance along the corridor of the first floor, she entered, without waiting for an answer to her knock, a large apartment made homelike by many personal belongings. There were two persons in the room. The Countess Szapary was lying half asleep on a sofa; her husband was sitting by the lamp, reading. The count arose quickly. He was thin, quite tall, and very dark, a sombre likeness of the duchesse. There was a vivid suggestion of her in his smile, and in his tenderness of manner as he kissed her.

"I am so glad you have come, my dear. Let me see how you look! You look very pretty, but tired. Are you well?"

"Splendid—never better in my life!"

"I am glad. When did you leave Paris? Yesterday?"

Instantly her eyes danced. "No, my brother! This morning!"

"This morning! It is impossible."

"That is just why I did it! Every one said it could not be done. We left at six this morning. It was not hard at all. I drove all the afternoon run myself. It was glorious!"

The countess, meanwhile, had risen sleepily from the sofa and had embraced her sister-in-law. She was fair-haired, short, and inclined to stoutness, with a compactness of outline that suggested a sawdust doll. She stood for a few moments with her head leaning up against Vera's, as though too sleepy to stand alone, and her sentence was divided by yawns.

"We have been waiting—up since Heaven knows how long. I wanted to go to—bed long ago. But Imre would sit up!"

The duchesse half led her back to the sofa, upon which the countess dropped down again. She yawned in the midst of everything she said, but seemed in no hurry to go to bed.

"And the children?" Vera asked. "Tell me the news."

"Léon is getting beyond my control," her brother answered. "Pali always was. But Todore is good."

"Pali cut his finger, but Imre says it is nothing; the rest are well. There is no news."

"And Tanya?" The duchesse's eyes looked suddenly soft as she asked after the youngest of the family.

"Exceedingly naughty," answered her sister-in-law. "People spoil her!" The last half of the sentence was an evident shaft at the duchesse. "However, your spoiling her falls back upon you. When she heard you were coming, the only way we could make her go to sleep at all was to put her crib in your room. Perhaps you can have it put out again

to-morrow, but you will have to manage her first."

The duchesse's answer was muffled by the veil she was unwinding, but the word "darling" was distinctly audible.

The countess seemed to care very little what the answer was, and showed the first evidence of waking up as she watched Vera finish taking off her wraps.

"Is that the new mode of doing the hair? My maid has been trying to arrange mine *à la corbeille*. Do you like it?"

She sat a little farther out on the edge of the sofa, and turned her head first this way and then that. Her head was tied up to resemble nothing so much as a dish of baked sausages, but she patted it quite delightedly with her plump white hands.

"Where did you get your dress, Vera? You always have lovely clothes! But then you live in Paris! I only get to Vienna once a year!"

She yawned only twice, under the stimulus of this vital topic. While she was speaking, a door on the farther side of the room opened, and the Princess Mitzka came in, wearing a pink woollen wrapper, and its color seemed to be reflected in her skin, making her cheeks rosy. A lace cap hid her hair, which was doubtless arranged for the night. She looked at Vera, her face beaming with pleasure, and, after kissing her niece, she kept her hands on her shoulders a moment, gently patting her once or twice, as though loath to let go.

The Princess Mitzka's entrance having interrupted the topic of fashion, the Countess Szapary, utterly overcome with sleep, and saying good night, went to bed.

The three that were left sat down again for a while. To her aunt and brother Vera described her trip, telling about the perfect roads and how well the motor went, relating a few incidents. She was very enthusiastic over the electrical indicator, without which they could never have made the time they did. But unaccountably she delayed mentioning that she had not come alone. She did not herself know why, but it

took a great effort to say at last to her brother: "Jan Piotrovski—you know, the great Polish poet—came with me."

The cheeks of the Princess Mitzka seemed to grow suddenly more pink than her wrapper. And something in either his aunt's or his sister's manner seemed to animate Szapary. "How did he happen to come with you?"

"I—don't know," she answered. Then she looked at her brother frankly. "I really don't know why he came; I doubt if he does himself. He followed an impulse, just as I was leaving. He is a great friend of mine—you will like him."

A while later, when she had made the move to go to bed, she put her arms about her brother's neck and pressed her cheek against his. "Ah, it is good to be here with you!"

"And it is good to have you! Sleep well, my dearest," he answered, and kissed her with a sincerity of affection that balanced her own.

Then the princess and she left the room together. Across the private hall a door was half open, and in the room beyond, her maid was quietly unpacking the valises. Only one shaded light was lighted. On the threshold her aunt said good night again, in a whisper. Vera softly entered, with finger on lips, and crossed the room to a crib that was standing by the bed. For a long moment she looked down at a little child's face, framed in a nimbus of golden curls; then she came back to her maid.

"Just get out the things I need for to-night," she whispered. "That is it—unhook me. Is my bath ready? Very well. I don't want anything else." Then she smiled, and looked toward the crib. "I shall want my coffee very early, I suppose!"

The maid smiled in her turn, and nodded. "I am afraid Madame la Duchesse will be very tired. But she is sweet—the little one." She, too, looked toward the crib. "Good night, madame!" and she tiptoed out of the room.

In semi-darkness, Vera undressed, with a rapidity and ease that proved her wonderful finish of appearance to be

one of nature's making, and not of artifice. In her nightdress, and with her beautiful hair tied loosely with a bow below her shoulder, she looked like a young girl. She lighted the night lamp by the bed, shading the light from the child's face. Then she got up on her bed, lying across it, with her chin in her hands, and for a long time she looked at the little person in the crib—at the little person whom she loved better than any one else in the world. She adored all of the Szapary children; but Tanya, the youngest, was like her very own. A delicate baby from her birth, she had survived a long and serious illness only because of her own ceaseless and devoted nursing. Vera rejoiced now in the bright color in the child's cheeks, in the rounded lines of the lovely little face. She longed to take her in her arms, to kiss even the little, pink palm, lying upturned on the counterpane; but she contented herself with kissing her in thought instead—through fear of waking her.

Then she said long prayers, and turned out the light.

Vera was very tired, and slept without a dream all through the night, but toward morning she dreamed of the forest around her home in Hungary. It was autumn, for leaves were beginning to fall. She felt them touch her face. Instinctively, she put her hand to brush them away, and caught something moving. Then she awoke to the fact of little fingers poking at her eyes. A soft little cooing voice laughed in delight.

"You wouldn't open your eyes!"

She had to blink once or twice before she could manage to wake.

"Well, my pussycat!" she smiled. "The sandman shut Aunt Vera's eyes very tight, didn't he? And last night Tanya's eyes were shut!" She sat up, reached out for the child's wrapper, and put it on her. "Now, where are the slippers?"

"Don't want slippers!"

"Oh, dear, what a bad farmer! Yes, a bad farmer!" Finding the slipper, and taking a little, bare ankle in one hand, she held the slipper in the other. "Just look at all the little pigs outside the barn, and you won't open the door, so they can run in—so!" She put the slipper on. "And here are some more little pigs that are all lost in the road!" This time she held the toe of the slipper pinched, so that there was no room for the toes to go in. "You see! The barn door is shut—they won't go in!" The child's big blue eyes were perfectly round as she looked up. At once, she said: "Yes, they *will* go in! *Go in! Pigs!*"

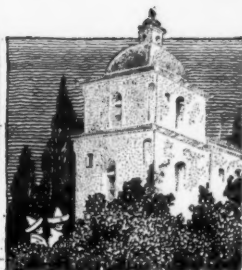
But her aunt held the slipper shut. After a moment, the pigs were all safely in the barn, and the duchesse gathered the baby in her arms, laughing. "Tanya is a very good farmer!" And from that the play went on to something else, to games and stories and the finding of a buried village beneath the avalanche of the bedspread. After a while, Tanya's nurse came to fetch her, and the duchesse rang for her coffee and her maid. It was only half-past seven, but she was wide awake for the day.

THREE-PART STORY. TO BE CONCLUDED IN THE JUNE NUMBER.



THE MAN WITH THE YELLOW STREAK

BY HERMAN WHITAKER



FROM a far bend the river swept down to the landing where we sat waiting and slid by, smooth, unrippled, expressionless, save for the occasional eddy that indicated the treacherous swiftness of the current. Along the banks its wet lips mowed and sucked at the trailing vegetation that rose like an embroidered screen; first the tangle of lower jungle, palms, creepers, *bejucas*, twined and twisted in mad confusion, then the trees, cedars, mahogany, a hundred unfamiliar kinds rising tier on tier to the huge *sabers* which spread their vast umbrellas over all. Still higher, a flight of brilliant birds splashed vermillion and ochre across the sky. In the deep shade an iridescence of insects sprayed the dust with liquid fire. It seemed as though nature had here indulged a sudden lust for color, and the effect was so gorgeous, intensely beautiful, that it cloyed like a surfeit of sugar. I felt relief when the melancholy blast of a conch shell announced the approach of the trader who was to take me down river to Tlacotalpam on the Gulf.

"He's peculiar—in some ways," my host, the planter, remarked as a big cedar dugout stuck her blunt nose out from behind the bend. "Though evidently a man of education, he has followed the river trade between the Gulf and the mountains for years, bartering cottons and hardware for the tobacco and rubber of the interior tribes. A tithe of his adventures would keep you writing for the rest of your life. Ab-

solutely fearless, he's always poking his nose into the place of danger. For instance, he went off three years ago on a prospecting trip into the interior of Yucatan with a notoriously bad Maya who, as might be expected, steered him into his own camp sixteen days up from the coast. From what he has told me about them, I judge that the tribal average assayed a little lower in character than his guide, and after he had broken that worthy's head with his own gun and had kicked him out of the camp, it took him three days to raise the standard by weeding out the ten next worst men. After that they ate out of his hand; indeed, he almost worked them to death grinding quartz in an abandoned Spanish *arastro*. If the pay streak and tribe had lasted, I suppose he'd have been there yet. But both pinched out together, and he came back here where life is easier if not so rich."

As the dugout bore swiftly down upon us under urge of the current plus the spurn of the Zapotec polemen's feet, he added: "So if you want stories for your bally old magazine, here's your chance. It will be your own fault if you don't screw out a dozen between here and the Gulf." He finished in lower tones: "That's his woman there in front."

My glance had already gone to the girl who stood in a sort of hold and rubbed *tortilla* paste on a stone *metate* that was set up level with her waist. If her crimson vestures, short bodice, and the skirt that swathed rather than draped her lower limbs, had not proclaimed her a Tehuana, I could have

divined it from her color, the rich gold hue that distinguishes the Isthmus peoples from the chocolate peons of the "Plateau." Though most of her race are handsome, she surpassed their high average. Oval of face, delicately featured, she was beautifully moulded in body and limbs. Her smile at the planter's rough hail was softly serious.

"Hello, you old pirate! Loaded to the gunnels with plunder, as usual. Put in for a passenger."

Piled high from blunt bows to square stern, the dugout was certainly heavily loaded. The cargo infringed even upon the flat plank gunwales, leaving only a narrow tramp for the feet of the polemen. Tobacco in leafy bundles, blocks of crude rubber, bales of gay *sarapes*, with here and there a crate of pottery, the rare black ware of Oaxaca, it was a romance in itself, called up visions of brown potters at wooden wheels, driven slaves of rich tobacco valleys, the golden girls who had exchanged their rich weaves for the trader's flimsy cottons. But as I was to have ample time for a closer inventory, my glance passed over it all to the man who sat astern.

The tropic suns that had trained away every superfluous ounce of flesh, had burned him also to the color of a mahogany bark; but for his blue eye, he could have passed for one of his own Zapotecs. Though not much over medium height, his sparseness added inches to his height, and he was very muscular. Hard muscle twined like copper bands around the bare arm that guided the big steering sweep. Indeed, he resembled nothing so much as a piece of copper cable. His clasp, shaking hands, aided the illusion with an impression that I had grasped a live wire.

"He's looking for stories," the planter called as, after a few minutes' chat, we floated out from the bank. "So cast loose your jaw tackle and put him tropic-wise."

Of course the silence that instantly seized upon the trader may have been due to a natural taciturnity in the presence of a stranger; but as he had been conversing quite freely up to that mo-

ment, I have always believed it to be due to that unlucky observation. In any case, he returned only monosyllables to my next attempt at conversation; scarcely spoke during the long, hot hours that the dugout pursued the current around enormous bends. I regarded it as a distinct triumph in diplomacy when he consented to enlarge on the prospecting story while we drank coffee and ate the *chili* his woman served at sundown.

"It was dead easy," he said, dismissing the whole business. "The headman's wife happened to be in the adobe where I took shelter after I'd trimmed their first rush. She tried to run, of course, and squealed like sixteen pig-killings when I grabbed her, but a kiss and a couple of hugs brought her round to my point of view. With her to keep watch while I dozed, it was simple as pie with cheese on the side, for they had nothing but old muzzle loaders to bet against my Winchester and Colt's forty-five's."

A second and third cup of coffee thawed him out still more, but it remained for moonlight to finish the conquest, the gentle radiance that settled like dew over the jungle, leaving its lower tangles in black shadow with only the great *sabers* looming, mushroom-like, against the dim sky. Freeing the spirit while it veils the cumbersome clay, night is always communicative, and while we drifted upon a streaming tide of quicksilver and the woman crouched at his knee, he talked freely out of a life that had been cast wide of the common. Stories came of themselves, great stories, the stories which, if one had genius to write them, the editor would reject with a sigh that the stark truth should not yet be for the common run of men. Occasionally he would pause to discuss a motive, unravel a puzzle of life, and thus it was that he came to speak of the man with the yellow streak.

"Brave?" he questioned musingly, when I exclaimed at the courage of a planter who had taken the *machetes* away from a half dozen drunken Mayas. "I don't know about that?"

Sometimes I think he was merely stupid. You see, he was a big, fat German—the fussy, important kind that are simply blind through egotism. If those Mayas had done the other thing, he'd have been three weeks into kingdom come before he'd have figured out what happened. Then you must have seen the other sort. Quick as the snap of a trap—so blamed quick, in fact, that all's over before they have time to think. But show me the man who sees first, takes, so to say, his natural fear by the throat with one hand while he strikes with the other, and I'll show you the man who is really brave.

"Now, there was Drury! The first I saw of him he had just come down to take a position as field superintendent at Las Bocas, a rubber plantation on the Mescalapa, over there in Chiapas. Though he was city bred and I don't usually cotton to the breed—at least, till it has had time to season—I liked him at first, he was so straight, square, *wholesome*; the word exactly describes him. You have been in these tropics long enough to know something of labor conditions? Well, it was just about ten times worse over there, for Cotton, the manager, was an easy-going Southerner and left the management of the labor altogether to Juan Ribera, a Spanish half-caste who had trained for the job in the Yucatan hennequin fields. Sixteen hours' driving labor under the burning tropical sun, a whip for the living, the river for the dead, about describes his system, and you can imagine the impression it made at first sight on Drury, a young man who had been brought up strictly in the moralities and humanities as they go in New England. He was in the throes of the first revulsion against the system at the time of my visit.

"I never shall get used to it," he told me, walking down to my boat the morning I left, and though I had seen some mighty stiff New Englanders settle down into the hardest kind of drivers, somehow I believed him. I wasn't a bit surprised at the news that met me at the first plantation as I came up river the following year.

"Drury? Oh, ye-es, he's at Las Bocas yet." Carroll, the English manager, answered my question in his funny drawl. 'But he has been up against it since you were here.'

"Carroll hadn't the particulars, but I learned enough to know that it had come, the trial that lies in wait for every white man in the tropics to decide his standing among his fellows—he had crossed wills with a native. That Drury had taken backwater in a quarrel with Juan Ribera was all that Carroll knew, but the plantations farther up river were buzzing with the news. You see, there isn't much to talk about in the tropics, and the personal counts more than it does at home. So, though it had happened just after my visit and was so nearly a year old, it was still good gossip, was being hashed and rehashed with every variety of comment, sneers, laughter, pity. Untried fledglings and old-timers alike delivered themselves of the same opinion:

"He's a nice fellow, Drury, but weak. Has a yellow streak in his make-up."

"To tell the truth, I couldn't quite believe it. Neither those steady brown eyes nor that wholesome face belonged to a coward. If he had failed there was something more to it. At any rate, I wasn't going to pass judgment till I had seen for myself, and as I had taken such a fancy to him on my last visit, you will readily believe that I was more anxious than curious when one evening my bowman wound his conch shell for the Las Bocas landing.

"He was there to meet me—brought out, of course, by his pride—and had I heard nothing, I believe that I could have divined all from the change in his manner and bearing. The droop of his mouth told of agonies of self-torture. An irritable self-consciousness, curiously compounded of doubt and defiance, the characteristic challenging glance of the man who does not feel sure of himself, had wiped the candor out of his eyes. He was plainly carrying a chip on his shoulder, and seeing at once that nothing but perfect frank-

ness would fit the case, I promptly knocked it off.

"You're a pretty fellow to let that black beast bluff you out! What do you mean?"

"You should have seen him fire up. A quick duck on my part let a fearful left swing go over me, and I clinched before he could get action with the right. 'Come, come!' I said, patting his shoulder. 'I didn't believe a word of it or I shouldn't have spoken like that. Come up to the house and tell me all about it.'

"And now you should have seen the gratitude that trembled through a blush. If Cotton hadn't hailed us to hurry and come up to supper, it would have come out of him there and then; the shame, hurt pride, that made a torment of his voice when he did speak out in the darkness of the *jacal* we shared that night.

"It began, of course, with the inevitable woman, the pretty wife of a native carpenter who had come down with her husband from Mexico City. They were respectable people, as peons go, legally married; belonged, in fact, to the class that would correspond with our skilled artisans at home. How they came to be mixed in with the drunks and incompetents which form the usual batch of *enganchados* from the Plateau, has nothing to do with the story. The man may have been entrapped by some smooth labor *contratista* under promises of high wages to work at his trade? The point is that he, or rather, *she*, was there, and being, as I say, excessively pretty, it isn't necessary to detail what happened. Sufficient, that as Drury was preparing one night for bed, the girl burst into his *jacal* with Juan Ribera hard at her heels, and threw herself forward, embracing his knees.

"If there had been no bad blood between them, it would still have remained a difficult situation for a greenhorn. Juan was a bad man—bad as he looked, and that is saying a good deal. Big, black, gross, his profile curved like that of a bird from the crown of his head over a slant forehead, beaked

nose, to a narrow chin. The deep furrows that plowed from the inner corners of his eyes down to his loose, coarse mouth, bespoke enormous cruelty. At rest, his face in its bleak coldness always reminded me of a vulture.

"As I say, if there had been nothing between them it would have been a hard position for the lad. But they had already quarreled over Juan's treatment of *enganchados* in the field, and, to make matters worse, Cotton was away at Frontera. Ugly at any time, Juan was absolutely devilish in a rage, and having seen him on a rampage, I'm free to confess that I would have shot from the hip, myself, the instant he showed in the doorway. So you can figure the chances of a green lad, who had been brought up, so to say, with a policeman always at his elbow, against that mad brute and his knife.

"He quit, of course. If you had ever been up against a man with a knife, felt it, in anticipation, exploring your vitals, you'd wonder as I did that he had sand enough to stammer a protest. After that, he stood, white and trembling, under a flood of obscene abuse, and as a last crowning insult, Juan left him all night under the guard of a Maya *cabo*. If he had omitted that, I suppose he would still have been at Las Bocas. You know the plantations well enough to understand that the shame of a woman is not to be weighed in the balance with the service of a good overseer. But easy-going and negligent as Cotton was, he couldn't overlook such a scandal as the setting of an Indian over his own superintendent, and Juan was fired.

"But that made it only so much the worse for me,' Drury groaned in the darkness. 'If he had stayed we should have had it out, sooner or later, and I would have had a chance to redeem myself.'

"At least he got his deserts,' I suggested, more for his comfort than because I believed it.

"No, I haven't even that satisfaction. He was good and ready to leave, has built him a camp a hundred miles

up this river, and is said to be making all kinds of money contracting labor out to Guatemala plantations—at least, he calls it contracting. If one-half of what we hear is true, it's the prettiest kind of a mixture of piracy and blackbirding. Besides holding up the mountain Indians on their way downstream, he raids their villages. I don't see why the Mexican authorities don't get after him?"

"As my woman's village lay five days poling up that very river, you can imagine that this was news indeed. Not that I was alarmed. Juan's camp lay a good three days higher up, and I believed that he held me in sufficient estimation not to molest Lolo's people. I was so sure of it that I answered Drury's question without mentioning the fact.

"You would—if you'd lived a few years in the tropics."

"As a matter of fact, it is impossible for the *Jefe-Políticos* to police the thousands of square miles of tangled jungle which form their districts with the half dozen *rurales* allowed them by the government. But I'm bound to confess that I never saw one who tried. The lad exclaimed his wonder and disgust when I suggested bribery or intimidation.

"Then the poor devils have no remedy against his oppressions?"

"The thought kept him silent for a while, and though, later, we talked more, I am certain that the plan he sprung on me next day occurred to him then. Looking backward, I sometimes wonder that I did not read his intention from his changed expression when we rose at daybreak. The irritable self-consciousness had disappeared. He talked quite cheerfully, both when we were dressing and at breakfast, and he broke out in merry laughter when, having bidden Cotton good-by, I came down to the landing and found him sitting in my boat.

"Got two weeks' hunting leave," he explained. "Get in and let's be off."

"Yes?" I questioned dryly. "And what kind of game might you be after?"

"And he answered with perfect

frankness: 'You know. It's no use talking, I've made up my mind. There'll be no peace for me till I've given that beast his thrashing, so you might as well come aboard.'

"Good God!" I yelled, a little irritated by his apparent simplicity. 'Do you imagine he's going to mix it with his fists?'

"Well—not quite.' He chuckled at my anger. 'Though I'd much prefer it. Won't you come aboard?'

"Yes, when you come ashore!" I roared, making a show of anger I was very far from feeling. 'Do you think I'm going to be a party to your suicide?'

"But he was stone-proof against argument, vituperation, persuasion. When I urged that my trip ended at Lolo's village—a fact, the current ran too strong beyond to suit a lazy trader—he replied that he would go on from there alone.

"Then you are the only one who does," he returned to my assertion of belief in his courage. 'And supposing you were not—do you think that I'd let that fellow go round for the rest of his life boasting that he'd proved one of our race a coward? Not much! I'm going—with you or alone.'

"In that case, I suppose you will have to come," I said, intending, of course, to argue him out of the notion at my leisure.

"Having no knowledge of my mental reservation, he was exceedingly grateful; you'd really have thought that I had opened up a royal road to fortune instead of presenting him with the prettiest kind of a chance to get killed. Indeed, excepting certain spells of quiet thought, he behaved—then and during the succeeding long days—like a boy at a picnic, reveling in the new sounds, sights, smells, fresh views that opened at every bend.

"At Las Bocas, you know, the Mes-calapa is still twice as broad as this river, and following its tranquil stream we saw village after village raise graceful palm roofs out of the vivid jungle. At their landings comely Indian girls would have their wares spread out for

trade, and others passed us going downstream in laden dugouts, big bronze goddesses who leaned on their poles while they gazed at Drury from under their hands. Had he obeyed that primitive call, accepted but one of the saucy challenges called out from the banks, my responsibility would have been ended. Like many another, he might have hid his hurt in a jungle *jacal*, drowned his pain in sexual love.

"But he laughed at the pretty baggages; was still with us when, after a week's hard poling, we fetched Lolo's village—or rather, the place where once it stood. For the jungle now ran wild through the clearing; boiled and bubbled a ferment of green life over the ashes of burned *jacales*. Instead of the color and cheer, brisk evening life, love songs of girls going to and fro from the river, childish laughter, buzz of women gossiping over the *braseros* that glowed redly in dusky interiors, in place of all these the night wind moved with a rattle like that of dry bones through the palms of the jungle. It required only Lolo's sudden burst of wailing to complete the desolation.

"Now, a few villages more or less don't cut much figure in the tropics. I had seen a hundred burned in the course of a single Central American revolution. But coming without warning upon the ruin in the red dusk of evening, it seemed wickedly lonely, wantonly cruel. The heavy jungle growth told, of course, that we were months too late to rescue the stolen people, and though Lolo's sorrow stirred me to anger, I doubt whether I should have gone on if it had not been for a shrewd suspicion that Juan Ribera had been encouraged to deal me this slap in the face by his easy victory over Drury. That decided me. Though I had resolved only that morning to turn here and take Drury back to Las Bocas, if necessary by force, I began at once to unload the canoe into a *cacha*; early morning saw us once more poling upstream.

"As you know, the rivers form the highways in the tropics; though, farther down, we had passed innumerable

craft, fishermen and freighters with sometimes a light canoe dashing between villages with a crimson freight of chattering women, the stream was now deserted, swept clean of life. Not even a chicken clucked on the sites of the burned or deserted villages. Though I'm not in the least imaginative, the solitude was beginning to get on my nerves when we were brought suddenly up, late in the afternoon of the third day, by a cable of twisted *bejucas* that crossed the river from bank to bank. From each of its ends a stockade over ten feet high ran back into the jungle where, as I found later, the sections circled on a wide arc back to the river, forming a trap for those who might try to escape up the banks. But we saw no sign of a camp. Puzzled, we were holding the canoe to the cable when a voice suddenly hailed and Juan Ribera came striding out from behind a thicket of palms.

"'It is you, Señor the Trader? And Señor Drury? This is the pleasant surprise. Put in here, the camp lies back from the river.'

"It was so sudden Lolo uttered a little cry. I confess to a start myself, and mortification was mixed with anger at the grin which marked his enjoyment of our nervousness. Yet with all my anger, and in spite of the fact that he must have watched us for some time, I never think of him as he stood there, big, black, sardonic, without a touch of admiration. Though he knew we had come on no errand of peace, he chatted and laughed while we were hauling in and mooring the dugout, asking after Cotton, this man and that. And he was absolutely frank; burst out laughing at a remark of mine as we followed him up the bank.

"'Looks like you were booming things?'

"'Yes, it catches *muchos*—the rope. Is it not, think you, the fine idea? It was that the *enganchados* used to steal away in my canoes by night, and, see you, this was not nice, because of the lies they spread down river. One lived on nettles expecting a visit of inquiry from the *Jefe*.' Leading into a path, he

went on: 'But this place is worked out. Only that the *Jefe* of Chilpancin sent me a batch of his debtors yesterday, I should not have an *enganchado* in camp. When they are contracted I shall have to move.' So far, he had scarcely glanced at Drury. Now he looked him squarely in the eye. 'Perhaps Señor Drury could advise upon a new location?'

"It was the first tilt, and rather to my surprise, for he wasn't usually quick of speech, Drury came back like a flash. 'No, but I *can* testify to the thorough cleaning you have given this.'

"Here was a fine opening for me to spring my own quarrel, but while we were hauling ashore, Drury's lips had formed the soundless phrase: 'My innings first!' and I let it pass.

"On his part, Juan simply grinned the wider, returning sarcastic thanks. 'Gracias, señor. It is good to have your good opinion. Here is the camp.'

"From the dank shade of thick jungle, the path had suddenly opened out on a clearing, the floor of which swelled from wide green skirts to a small plateau. A perfect site, Juan had put it to the best advantage by ringing the edge of the plateau with a high stockade that hid all but the roofs of the *jacales* within. Surrounded by feathery palms and, above them, great trees that simply flamed with the orchids that covered them, trunk and limb, it basked in the amber lights of the low sun, as pretty a village as I had ever seen.

"I'm free to confess, however, that I didn't like the stockade, and my uneasiness was not allayed by the villainous looks of the Maya *cabos* who were lounging around the gates. But if I had ever been in the habit of calculating chances, it was now too late, and putting on a good front, I chaffed Juan about the prisoners who peered at us through the chinks of the big *galera*.

"*'Enganchados*, you said? They look like river Zapotecs?'

"Why—so they do! I had to laugh at his mock surprise. 'The *Jefe* of Chilpancin is said to be a great rascal, quite capable of slipping a few free people

in among his debtors.' Shrugging, he continued: 'But what can one do? They are here—a bad lot, in any case. Only last night it is that one rewards my care by trying to run away. Tonight he is to be flogged as a warning against ingratitude to his fellows, so you are in the good time, Señor Drury, to be amused.'

"We were now on the threshold of his *jacal*, and pausing, he looked back at Drury, the insolence in his glance curiously mingled with curiosity and expectation. If I hadn't felt it from the first, that one look would have told me that he knew the lad's thought, feeling, the errand that had brought him there. As their quarrel dated back to the flogging of an *enganchado* in the Las Bocas fields, I was certain that he had purposely offered the opening, so I, too, watched Drury closely until he turned and looked away.

"Enter, señores, the meal is ready.'

"Juan's invitation brought an end to the awkward pause, and as we followed in I experienced a feeling of disappointment. It would, of course, have been the rankest kind of folly to start anything there, in full view of the *cabos* who were watching us from the gates. But he could have returned glance for glance, stare for stare. Was he weakening already? Was that first sharp answer merely a flash in the pan, first and last flare of an imagined courage? The doubt forced itself in and grew as Juan continued his baiting at table.

"'Pretty, do you not think?' he asked, nodding toward the lithe Zapotec woman who served the meal. 'But Señor Drury is acquainted with my taste.'

"At that Drury's glance rose, but instantly fell again, and while he ate in silence, Juan continued his diabolic rallery; asked me if it were true that the Las Bocas people were demanding marriage certificates with their *enganchados*? What about the Sabbath school for *niñas* that Señor Cotton was said to be running? Also he indulged in that malicious innuendo which comes natural to his race; whenever I turned

the conversation, he would bring it back with some devilish insinuation, veiled allusion. And all the while, talking or eating, his vulture eyes searched Drury's face with quick, darting glances that enormously increased his likeness to that carrion bird. But here he had less success. If Drury felt the vicious probing, he gave no sign, and impatience and irritation colored Juan's tone when he spoke as he led outside at the close of the meal:

"Now for the dessert. Bring out your stools, and we can smoke here under the eaves."

"While we were eating, dusk had fallen, but the light of a dozen lanterns showed every line and crease in the nude flesh of the poor devil who was tied, hand and foot, to two stakes driven hard in the ground. But I'm not going to describe that flogging. Enough that in my time I had seen men beaten, fierce devils at that, till the last spark of manhood died, went out with whimpering whines and left them groveling worms in the dust. But I had never seen anything as bad as that. Beginning, as I say, at dusk, it continued till the full moonlight reduced the lanterns' glow to a pale yellow smudge, for, with devilish ingenuity, the lashes were delivered minutes apart.

"I have always believed that the whole thing was gotten up for our benefit. After we had taken our seats, Juan slung a lantern under the eaves just where its light would shine full upon Drury's face, and all the time it was going on, he fed full on the lad's red misery. Long before it was over, I saw bright points of sweat oozing through a dark suffusion. The knuckles of the hands that lay in his lap shone white through the stretched skin. His eyes, looking once at me, expressed the most poignant distress, yet up to the moment that the poor wretch was cast loose he made no attempt to interfere.

"Come, now we shall have drinks to top off—and a little game." Juan laughed as he rose to go inside; a laugh packed fat with malevolent satisfaction, unveiled contempt, and which brought me a sudden change of feeling.

"During that hour of torture, my own feelings had swung between disgust at myself for not having sprung my own quarrel when we had Juan alone on the river bank, to contempt at Drury for his lack of spirit, but these now merged in sudden anger. Stung by the sudden feeling that his fat contempt included me, I stepped quickly up behind him as we went inside, was just about to loose a swing that would have sent him out through the flimsy pole siding, when I was suddenly seized and swung round like a top.

"My innings!"

"While his lips reformed the silent phrase, Drury pointed toward the *cabos* who were still visible through the open doorway on their way to the *galera*; pointed with a gesture so significant that it pierced my stupidity, informed me in a flash of the reason behind his patient endurance—it was *my* safety he had had in view.

"Wait till they get to bed!"

"Misunderstanding my astonishment, he formed it syllable by syllable, but I was really staring at his changed expression, for while the suffocating crimson of bridled passion still dyed his face, his eyes shone hard and steady as bits of browned steel; in place of the shamed youth of the plantations, there stood a man, cold and stern. Utterly surprised, I stood and stared, as I say, till his frown warned me to turn away.

"As Juan was reaching bottles and glasses down from a shelf, he had not seen, and though my fingers itched to remove his sarcastic grin, the play would have dragged out to the end if he had been content with his full harvest of malice. But, emboldened by immunity, he carried his insolences just one step too far.

"He wouldn't have stood for this a year ago," he said, gently waving his glass at Drury. "But they all come to it—great and small. Here's to the good boy! What did you think of it all?" And, setting down his glass, he slapped Drury's back.

"Even if he had omitted that last familiarity, the thing might have dragged on to a safer moment, but as the hand

touched his shoulder, Drury straightened as though he'd been shot.

"What did I think of it? Damn you! This!"

"Had there been time, it would have been funny to watch Juan's contemptuous grin flash into an expression of blank surprise. But, with the word, the lad's fist took him under the jaw and he was lifted, thrown, and rolled over twice before he straightened out. Then, snatching a *bejuca* from a pile that had been cut for the flogging, Drury laid on with all his might.

"How — do — you — like — it — yourself?"

"The words were jerked out between blows that cut the air with a sharp whistle. The first brought Juan to his knees—to be knocked over again by a fearful left swing. Why he did not give the alarm at once, I cannot say—unless it was because he hated to have his people see him whipped like one of his own slaves. Whipped, he didn't. Mixing curses with snarls of pain, he pulled a knife and had his wrist almost broken by a quick kick that sent it flying outdoors. Not until I forestalled him in the sudden grab at his pistols that lay with a saddle *machete* on his bunk, did he give up and call for help.

"I have always held myself in blame for what followed. A man of my training had no business to stand looking on like a boy at a fight when a small tap with the flat of a *machete* would have put the fellow to sleep till we were out of the camp and half a mile down river. But I was so glad to see the lad make good, that I forgot all about the *cabos* till I heard their feet just outside the door. It's some comfort to know that I did then display a little *sabé*. One smash put the lamp out of business, and without waiting to declare hostilities or any other fool preliminaries, I let drive with both Juan's guns through the open door.

"A yell told that I had winged at least one; but, old campaigners all of them, they scattered to cover behind the nearest huts. A volley would have riddled that birdcage of a hut, but they dare not fire while Juan was with us,

and he did not choose to present me with the pretty mark he would have made in the moonlit doorway. If we had given them time, they would, of course, have surrounded us. But you know that a couple of strokes with a *machete* will let the side out of any *jacal*, and in ten seconds or less we were out through the back wall and running.

"It was, in fact, done so quickly, that we rounded the *galera* and were halfway to the gates before Juan raised the alarm. Looking back as we passed out, I saw them coming, strung out like wolves on a trail, the stream of them lit with wicked glints, the moonlight flashing on knives and *machetes*. We were in full view, of course, crossing the glade, and a spattering volley splashed up the turf all round us. They emptied their guns as we ran along the jungle path, but the bullets flew wild, in clipping the jungle growths above our heads. But the darkness that favored us here in one way, hurt in another. Because of their familiarity, they gained on us; were right at our heels when we shot out of the jungle to the river bank.

"Now, expecting just something of the sort, I had whispered Lolo before I left to keep a sharp lookout—and she had. But you know how peons sleep! Worn out by a month's heavy poling upstream, my Zapotecs slept like logs, and though she lit into them with a *bejuca* the instant she heard my guns, they were not more than half awake when I landed among them all in a heap, knocked silly by a bullet that grazed my left temple.

"Nor would it have made much difference if they had been wide awake; Juan and his hounds were pressing us too close. If Drury had followed me in, they would have swarmed after, chopped us to bits at their leisure. Half-stunned, I was conscious of his crackling guns, heard Lolo scream to the stern man to cut the rope. But even after my scattered wits began to gather, a red mist still rolled before my eyeballs; did not lift until Juan's strident cry broke out:

"His guns are empty Rush him! All together!"

"Then I saw—across a widening stretch of black water, I saw Drury, the man with the yellow streak, standing high up on the bank in a splash of moonlight that showed rings of blue smoke curling up from his guns. Then—it passed in a flash, the black mass that burst from the shadow, Juan leaping ahead, *machete* raised for a blow. I glimpsed his face, passion-torn, black, writhing with hate, the eyes sparkling with lust to strike. But the blow never fell. Twenty feet! Ten! Five! Oh, he made sure! At five feet Drury's hand suddenly rose. Came a last spurt of flame and, arms spread wide, Juan plunged headlong over the bank.

"The last shot, it was delivered too closely for him to escape. But before, he went down under the rush, he turned, by God, sir, he turned, this fellow with the yellow streak, turned and smiled as he waved his hand!"

Long ago the woman's dark head had drooped to the plump arm that crossed the trader's knee, and under its flimsy crimson her deep bosom heaved in gentle rhythms. From the bows came the heavier respirations of the Zapotec polemen. During the last hour the river had opened on wider reaches,

and across its tremulous silver floated the call of a night bird. With rush of beating wings, a shape passed overhead—most opportunely for the trader. When he turned his head again the emotion that threatened his bronze calm was passed. Bending so carefully that he did not disturb the sleeping girl, he reached cigars out of a locker, and after we were well lit, smoked silently, gazing off down river. I studied his thoughtful face.

It was a sudden change, accession of sternness that caused me to break silence. "Well?"

"Exactly." He started, smiling. "As I say, it passed in a flash, in the time one could cast a pole. Once out from the bank, it would have taken twenty minutes to turn and pole back to the landing; as a matter of fact, the current carried us around a bend before we could get out the Winchesters. They didn't try to pursue us."

"And?" I felt sure there was more to come.

He smiled again. "Silence is golden even here in the tropics. But if you must know—two weeks later Cotton, Carroll, and a few others who felt a bit ashamed of themselves, went on a hunt up river with me." After a long pause, he added: "The shooting was good."

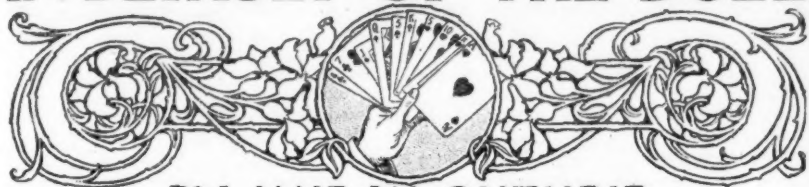


FAREWELL

FAREWELL, sweet love
That never was my own!
But like a tender dove
From snowy pastures flown
A while near my heart pressed
To warm its chilly breast.

Farewell, youth's hours
That seemed all mine! But were
Fast-flying birds, or flowers
That withered when the air
Of summer turned too cold,
And hearts grew strange and old.
RHODA HERO DUNN.

IN DEFAULT OF THE DUEL



BY JANE W. GUTHRIE



BENTON WHITNEY'S acceptance of Mrs. Wilford's invitation having been contingent upon her permission for a late arrival, he stood now at the back of the box, accustoming himself to the dim dusk of the theatre.

Beyond the box, on the outer edge of his vision, the imperfectly defined faces of the audience, like masks floating on the vapor of darkness, focused themselves upon the stage, where, in a brilliant circle of light, two actors were engaged in the presentment of a duel, the rapiers ringing steel on steel, the flash and play and glitter of leaping blades seeming to split the light and cut the air with hiss and crackle. Whitney fenced well himself, and this was no stage slash and thrust, but an exhibition of genuine swordsmanship that had given the play one of its chief claims to popularity; and it must have been a sympathetic reflection of the savage whip and thrust of the rapiers which printed the scowl upon his face, when, with the usual melodramatic dénouement of a woman rushing between the combatants, he turned to assure himself of the identity of the rest of the party and saw Richard Brewster's big, blond head drawn by eagerness and the crowded condition of the box to an unnecessarily close level with Susanne Lynde's white shoulder.

It was not a sight, he felt, calculated to inspire kindly feelings toward one's fellow beings; which may account for

the fact that when the curtain fell and the lights flared up in the theatre, he gave a most hasty and perfunctory greeting to Mrs. Wilford and her guests, and then placing his hand genially upon Brewster's shoulder, leaned across him and spoke directly into Susanne's ear, using a most confidential and tender tone.

"I would like to fight that way for you." But speaking to the others of them, he added in gloomy dissatisfaction with ideals of the present: "Life was picturesque in the days of the duel. Romance lived in it."

Susanne turned quickly and surveyed a trifle impatiently Whitney's Latin face and tall, slight figure, his intense, dark, eager eyes glowing with what she knew to be the dramatic temperament.

"What utter nonsense!" she exclaimed. "Life to-day, I'll warrant, is much more interesting than in the 'picturesque' past, because sensibly commonplace."

Then she proceeded to set in motion a general discussion on the subject of the duel, justifying Whitney's name for her, "Variety," since, as he said, she was, herself, the spice to every argument; while he turned moodily to consider the others of the party—Mrs. Wilford, fat and blonde and always half-asleep, her older brother, Henry Morton, journalist, lean, and dark, and tall, with deep-set eyes, and a face compelling attention, and Joan Seymour, their young niece, the embodiment of youth, with flashing brown eyes and brilliant teeth that made one desire to keep her continually laughing. She

was, so Brewster, the other member of the party, said, both temptation and the teased, since he and Whitney knew no better fun than to get Joan into an argument and tease her until she, half-laughing, half-crying, begged them to stop.

As for Brewster, Whitney reflected irritably that a theatre box was too small for six feet of big blond athletic hulk. His lips lifted in a cynical smile. Could anything better illustrate Mrs. Wilford's social inaptitude than this party which she had assured him had been hastily gathered together? Mrs. Wilford absolutely lacked that sixth sense by which the socially successful divine the elements which fuse.

In the first place there were Susanne Lynde and Henry Morton. Not once, but many times, Susanne had urged and illustrated her determination never to meet him, since Morton, dictator of the policy of a great daily paper, a man with an unrestrained pen, had written and paragraphed and preached against what he considered wickedness in a high place, until he had brought the doers of it to a just condemnation, thereby creating a perverse belief in Susanne's mind that the men were victims of Morton's persecution. And Brewster! Whitney pulled at his mustache savagely. Times had changed since Whitney and Brewster had found pleasure in each other's society.

Once close friends, and even now held in daily close association in their initiation into the same firm of distinguished legal advisers, the one the brother, the other the son of a member of the firm, the relations between them were at present measurably strained.

Considering Susanne Lynde, this was not unnatural, however deplorable it might be deemed; yet Susanne, looking upon them both as mere boys, being three or four years older than either, and delighting in their companionship, carefully maintained a strategic, triangular inclusion by which she studiously evaded any partiality which might cause one man to consider himself favored above the other; but in this lay the aegis of the rift. Having exacted that

penalty of youth by which a man falls in love the first time with a woman older than himself, and secretly applauding her neutrality toward the other, each man engaged himself to break it down on his own account, while keeping a strict watch lest the other be moved by a similar impulse.

But Whitney was recalled from moody contemplation of his companions by Mrs. Wilford's voice sighing plaintively:

"We wouldn't have time to spend on duels to-day. The preliminaries and the performance take too long." She herself was always trying to find what had become of the moments that she had wasted.

Everybody laughed at her; but Morton, philosophically inclined, observed: "We haven't given up the duel. We have only interpreted it to our own age. That form of duel went out of fashion because it no longer illustrated man's mental attitude toward life. But we still have the duel, and though our steel is of a different fibre and form, it is equally effective."

"He babbles of the strong-armed law!" groaned Brewster, turning to Joan.

"He does nothing of the kind," insisted Joan. "You haven't a soul above your profession," she mocked. "You are trying to make out that the law is mightier than Uncle Henry's pen."

"There must always be the duel," urged Whitney, obstinately, and a trifle didactically. "Man demands it. Life itself is a continual contest."

"Life," remarked Brewster, with whimsical conviction, "is a protest, quieted by a compromise."

Susanne had taken no part in this conversation, but sitting back in her chair had been wondering at Morton's presence, since Mrs. Wilford had assured her that her husband, instead of Morton, was to be with them, and she was asking herself whether she would have refused the invitation, as she had many others when aware of his inclusion, for Susanne's impulsive prejudices were a flaw in an otherwise disciplined and delightful personality. She

had been considering Morton now, and half-resentfully feeling the charm of his voice, rich and full and beautifully modulated; his eyes, those deep-set eyes of the thinker; and his absolute surety of himself. No one ever described him in any but these characteristics, forgetting the rather loosely put together frame, the obstinate hair which rose like a fringe from his large head set clumsily above broad but slightly bowed shoulders; and the idea struck her now that he and she had been engaged for years in an invisible duel, feint, and lunge, and parry, with personal prejudices and strong wills and alert intellects for weapons. It was a play for place now.

She sat forward in her chair, a gleam of light in her hazel eyes, her changing mouth curved in a charming smile, as she spoke in a soft, low voice directly to Morton. She knew that he had referred to duels of the intellect, the mind, the will, but she chose to misunderstand him.

"Do you mean to say," her tone was one of grieved surprise, "that words are our only effective weapons to-day? That our duels are only fought with the 'little member'? That 'Life and Death are in the power of the tongue'?"

Morton turned quickly toward her, deliberately, slowly considering her, as he looked straight into her eyes. He was constantly hearing in these days of Susanne Lynde from his niece Joan, who had joined Susanne in her studio for instruction in the gentle art of book-binding and illustrating; Susanne having been engaged for the past three or four years, since the death of her father and mother and the acknowledged incompetency of the former in regard to money matters, in supporting herself and giving distinction to her art. Though she had passed through a bitter struggle, she was now sailing the calm waters of success, and Morton had added himself to his sister's party this evening with intent, pushing Mr. Wilford aside with the avowed purpose of meeting Susanne Lynde. He knew and had laughed at Susanne's strictures in regard to himself; but

those were personal, and he was too big to consider anything of the kind worth taking notice of; but, being an iconoclast in regard to conditions and ways among men, he was exceedingly conservative concerning the women of his family, and Joan had been voicing some very revolutionary doctrines lately, evidently gathered along with the knowledge of bookbinding from her instructor, and he had a fancy that he would like to study and test the mentality of that instructor.

"If that were so," he asked pleasantly, noncommittally, "would society then merit your description of 'commonplace'?"

Susanne hesitated a moment, so deftly had he parried and turned aside her question. Then, on guard herself, with a perplexed yet flattering suggestion of deference to his opinion in her manner, she said: "What do you think?"

"For myself, I should deny the word 'commonplace' in that sense as descriptive," he replied promptly, taking an advantage of an opening, "largely because woman as a social factor, on the stump, the platform, in the office, and on the street, is making life extremely picturesque in a continuous challenge to man to engage in a duel of words. If you chose to give my words that interpretation——"

He smiled genially, spread out his hands, and shrugged his shoulders slightly, leaving the inferences and conclusions with her, evidently determined not to express his own, but to secure opinions from her by engaging her in an argument. Susanne wanted to slap him. Again he had stepped lightly aside, leaving her to lunge at the empty air.

"He thinks you are a suffragette," whispered Brewster commiseratingly, "a wolf treating his Red Riding Hood to false and specious doctrines."

Susanne's eyes gleamed with golden lights. She did not intend to be taken that way. She would choose the place and the pace, and he should follow.

"Then you believe in the Oriental seclusion of women?" she asked; and he would have been indeed clever had

he detected anything but a mild curiosity of his opinions in her languid, indifferent tones.

"Not at all! Not at all!" he asseverated, smiling engagingly. "On the contrary, I have the greatest respect for and would sanction the widest latitude for effort in man or woman when it represents an ideal. You see, Miss Lynde"—he leaned forward and spoke to her alone, with that charming smile still upon his lips—"I enjoy the duel—of words or pen. I engage in it every day. It is meat and drink to me, but—" He drew back slightly, took a long breath. "I like a good, fair, stand-up fight."

But Brewster who had been listening with half an ear to Morton, and to Joan and Whitney who were arguing also, broke in just then.

"Do you mean to tell me," he said, turning reproachfully first to Morton and then to Joan, "that your uncle has been instructing you in the subtleties of the tongue as a shield for life and a guard against death?"

"You who need no instruction," murmured Whitney in grieved surprise as Joan giggled and flashed her brown eyes.

"Rather let us hope," urged Brewster, forgetfully joining issue with Whitney quite in their old form, "that he has been instructing her in diplomacy. Diplomacy, you understand, Joan, is one of your uncle's greatest assets with both tongue and pen."

"You talk," Joan protested indignantly, "as if he veiled his meanings; was afraid to speak out in good sound English. No one could accuse him of that."

"You are proving"—Brewster sat back resignedly. "You are proving to me the falsity of my hopes. I see now that they were quite unfounded. You have never learned the higher uses of the language—how to be rude without being knocked down; how to prevaricate without telling a lie."

Joan endeavored to speak, but Whitney withheld her. "Calm yourself, Joan. Do not be unnecessarily upset. I imagine that your friend is trying to

tell you that politeness is the language of diplomacy."

Susanne laughed outright. She loved this supplemental "quip and prank" of these two, who had been such delightful companions until they had both fallen in love with her and out with one another. It had always given such a graceful finish to the routine of her day when they had dropped in on their way uptown and sat about her studio playing with her tools, setting her presses for her, or stretching her leather for her with their stronger hands, waiting for her until she was ready to walk home with them under their mutual protection. But even though she watched them now with almost tender eyes, she was keenly aware of Morton's penetrative scrutiny of her, as he sat far back in the shadow of the box, his deliberate gaze fixed upon her.

Joan had described Susanne to him, as "small, and skinny, and brown, with big hazel eyes with golden lights, with a voice that steals your heart away, and hands that are so expressive that you know at once why she has made everything she undertakes a success." He would never have described her so, he thought now. With all his practical direction of affairs, he was also an idealist, and as he studied this small feminine, intensely feminine small thing, he remembered a dusky nasturtium he had seen that autumn day, swinging lightly on its slender stalk, its face toward the sun as its vine climbed up a stone wall, a thing of infinite grace, sweet and spicy, and full of all bewildering shades of brown and red. He wished now that he had plucked it, as he had meant to do, and put it in his buttonhole to stimulate his thought with its delicate, sweet, elusive, spicy fragrance.

Nor did Susanne feel that his study of her was rude or intrusive, but she did not understand it; nevertheless, she began to feel her resentment slipping from her like mist before the sunshine; yet, when he spoke to her, close at hand, and, before she found herself ready to meet him, she was indignant with herself, not with him.

"What do you think of it, Miss Lynde?" There was a note of indulgence in the tones, an amused tolerance that she would never have believed him capable of. "What do you think of it? Is the tongue mightier than the pen?"

Susanne answered quickly, flippantly almost. "It depends upon whose tongue or pen it happens to be—yours or mine."

And then as she met his eyes, self-condemnation flamed over her face, and the gesture of her hands repudiated her words; but Morton's eyes held hers. The dingy theatre was all about them, the lights flaring dustily, and the music of the orchestra jingling beside them, while the others chatted gayly and the hum of voices in the audience encompassed them. But each of these two had come to a great silence.

Neither of them could have spoken, and Morton's eyes held Susanne Lynde's until the curtain fell upon the last act and they all separated; Mrs. Wilford, Morton, and Joan going home in Mrs. Wilford's limousine, while Susanne insisted on walking with Brewster and Whitney, one on either side of her. Whether one intellect, one mind, one will, bowed to the other and dropped the weapon of personal prejudice, or whether a truce was called with the intention of renewing that wordless duel between those eyes, at some future time, no one but those two could have said.

It was fully a week after, however, that Whitney, starting to put on his overcoat to walk uptown in the fresh autumn air, for the purpose of dropping in at Susanne's studio that he might walk home with her, observed, with extreme exasperation, Brewster preparing to do the same thing.

Neither of them had yet been assigned a definite place in the offices, but had found, each for himself, a corner in the law library, while reading, studying, or waiting to be called upon for service, until other quarters could be arranged for them.

"Which way are you taking?" he asked almost blandly, the inference in his voice and manner insistently pro-

claiming: Whichever way you say, I'll take the other."

Brewster grinned as he ducked into his sleeves. "Whichever way you choose," he replied.

Whitney gazed at him a moment through half-closed eyelids, repressed the profane expletives which seemed to hover about his lips, gave a short, irritated bark, then said gruffly:

"Come on."

And each having intended to walk home, they took the subway because both of them hated it.

After they left their station, they walked along together in moody and grim silence, until just as they were nearing Susanne's studio, both of them stopped involuntarily, arrested by the spectacle of Susanne and Henry Morton leaving the building together to start out on a brisk walk. They gazed at the strange sight as if overcome for a moment, then they stared at each other; then Whitney spoke with sudden ferocity to his companion.

"I'm tired of having you play the sleuth on me; I can get along without having you tag at my heels."

Brewster answered him only with a most exasperating grin.

"I want the matter settled," demanded Whitney irritably.

"All right," agreed Brewster genially.

"Either you or I have got to get out," insisted Whitney.

"How are you going to determine which one?" asked Brewster, with an utter absence of seriousness. "You can't expect me to be ordered about by you, or to toss up a coin to settle the matter."

"We'll settle the matter as gentlemen arrange such affairs, and you'll hear from me later."

With which cryptic utterance Whitney stalked grandiloquently away, leaving Brewster's athletic six feet of good looks gazing after him dazedly.

And in truth he sent a challenge to Brewster to fight a duel, by his friend Duane; and Brewster, putting the matter in the hands of his friend Ingram, assured himself disgustedly that there

was nothing he enjoyed more than seeing Whitney make an ass of himself. He told Ingram that he'd have nothing to do with any of the arrangements, beyond undertaking, at any time and place the two of them chose to designate, to teach Whitney to behave himself like a sensible man, not a man out of a story book.

Neither Duane nor Ingram was lacking, however, in a sense of humor, and after a due consideration of all the personalities involved, with the utmost deliberation and proper observance of punctilio, the weapons chosen were—oh, spirit of Queensborough!—cards, to be played in a game of bridge; the meeting place, the law library in the offices downtown, as the most secret and secluded spot at the hour set—six o'clock the following evening.

With these death-dealing weapons, Whitney and Brewster were to decide their fate and their future. One rubber was to provide satisfaction. If Whitney lost he was to obliterate himself; find a haven in whatever spot he chose, but it must be far removed from his present habitation. Similarly, if Brewster was the loser, he was to be dead to the world that now knew him, and to vow never again to speak to the object of his present affections.

It was just five minutes of six o'clock when Brewster and Ingram stepped from the downtown station of the subway into the street, and the clock was on the stroke, the chimes ringing the hour from a near-by church steeple, as they appeared at the door of the library. Everybody else had left the building, and the night watchman understood just as much as was necessary to understand through the consideration received.

It was a peculiar place, this room chosen for the meeting, the room where these two men had sat together for weeks. An enormous stately apartment, its design drawn from the library in a famous English country house, it was a perfect passion of color; so red, so glowing, so brilliant that even the shaded lights of electroliers at night failed to subdue or tone to a less san-

guinary note its burning splendor. The deeply recessed windows were hung with long, red velvet curtains, only slightly held by silken ropes, and these with the great square rugs set with precision down the splendid length of the room, were reflected in a more sombre tone on the walls, against which were set the high, carved bookcases; and these, after ranging the walls, were carried out into the room in exquisitely designed arches, while the tall carved Jacobean chairs, and huge library tables, as well as the Jacobean mantelpiece, seemed to lift themselves toward the darker shadow of the arched and groined black-oak ceiling like a passion of life that is lost in shadow.

As Ingram opened the door for Brewster, the room seemed to spring at them, the color to flame in their faces, brutal in its high blaze; and Whitney, standing just inside the door with Duane at his elbow, his face passionately white and still, his dark eyes ablaze with excitement, looked, in this flaming room, the part he had elected to play—the duelist. The other two men to whom he had always seemed small, dark, insignificant, realized that even in that overpowering room he stood out as a personality; a trifle theatrical, the reminder of an age that is now past, but picturesque, poetic. Brewster, however, was distinctly of to-day, an athlete, a trifle commonplace, but a man.

The men exchanged formal salutations; their seconds drew forth the table upon which were set cards and scores.

Duane said: "Gentlemen, are you ready?"

Ingram said: "Gentlemen, are you ready?"

And to the repeated affirmative, they all sat down to the game.

In discussing previously the question of a discard from strength or weakness, Duane had said: "Ordinarily, all of us would realize that the situation generally explains itself; but in this case, we must play by the book." And Ingram agreeing, had said the discard from strength, as making the game on narrower lines.

A deadlier game of bridge, with more purpose and precision and with less conversation, was never played. The atmosphere was tense, strained. The waves of color appeared to float through the room, to dazzle the eyes and thrill the heart with their exciting call.

The men's faces were white and set; they looked as if carved from marble, while their eyes were glittering spheres of intelligence; and it was in their eyes that they seemed to live and focus thought. It was a picture for a painter—this game of Life and Love—those four men challenging Fate and tempting Destiny. Not once did they look at each other. Not once did they apparently waver in purpose. In their eyes and ears and the mechanical motion of their hands, they lived, it seemed to all of them.

Sound was intensified there. The chimes ringing from the neighboring church steeple echoed and reechoed through the room as the waves of color floated before their eyes, vivid, intense; but gradually the street grew to quiet. The passing footsteps, the crisp crackle of voices, all of the murmur of the night melted into those moving moments told off by the chimes, and only the blurred hurry of a taxicab down the quiet street reached the players in their slow, careful, fateful play of the cards.

They stood even. Game all. The rubber game! But when it came to Whitney's deal with Brewster leader, the score stood eighteen to twenty-four against the dealer. Holding the queen of hearts; seven, six, four, three of diamonds; queen, nine, eight, seven, five, three of spades; eight, six of clubs, Whitney passed the make to Duane who made it no trumps.

Brewster, the leader, held the knave, seven, six of hearts; queen of diamonds; ten, four, two of clubs; and ace, king, knave, six, four, two of spades and led the king of spades.

The dummy went down with ace, king, four, three of hearts; ace, ten of diamonds; king, queen, knave, seven, five, three of clubs; and the ten of spades.

Third hand held ten, nine, eight, five, two of hearts; king, knave, nine, eight, five, two of diamonds; ace, nine of clubs; and no spades.

To the lead of spades, Ingram, third hand, was obliged to discard and, by agreement, from strength. He hated to do so, but he did, using his deuce of diamonds. Brewster then gave him the queen of diamonds, leading through the dummy's ace, and Ingram, in order to clear the suit, took the queen with his king and returned the knave, which was taken by the ace in dummy's hand. Whitney, leading from dummy, played the king of clubs now, which Ingram covered with his ace, enabling him to bring in his diamonds. Alas! Alas! What would he not have given for that deuce of diamonds which he had discarded? It would have made the odd for Ingram and Brewster. They were already six by trick, but he had thrown away the odd, he saw now, on the first discard, and thrown the game with it. There was nothing to do but to lead up to the hearts in the dummy hand. But as he pondered, and every one else hung intently on his play, they were all conscious of an interruption, of something breaking the strain they were under, something that they knew now they had all heard even through the fateful fall of the cards, and the hurry of blood throbbing through their veins.

It connected itself in all of their minds with the blurred haste of the taxicab in the street. Each man knew too that he had heard far-off voices in that deserted building, each man knew that the movement of the elevator, muffled as it was by distance, had echoed in that room; but still more vivid was the imperative noise of conversation, the protest of the watchman, the light, sweet staccato of a woman's tones mingled with the deeper, fuller ones of a man, the swish of a woman's skirts across the polished floor of the hallway, and then, the quick turn of the handle of the great doors leading into the library.

The men looked inquiringly into each other's faces as they sat still about the table; but as the door was flung open,

involuntarily, as if moved by a common impulse, each man dropped his cards to the table and rose to his feet to meet and face the interruption.

Susanne Lynde stood in the doorway! Susanne Lynde for whose love, for whose favor, these men played cards with destiny!

She stood there a moment, a sweet, whimsical, reproving smile upon her lips.

"It is here I find you, is it? Playing for a stake, are you?" She shook a finger of reproof at them. "You wouldn't be down here this time of night, if you were not. And I—I telephoning all over this town for you, and Henry——" she turned and looked over her shoulder, as Morton came and stood protectively beside her, looking indulgently down upon her—"and Henry doing the same! I only heard where you were from Ingram's man, and then I said I'd come and fetch you myself. You see."

Her evening coat fell back over her shoulders, and as Morton stooped to pick it up, they all noticed a strange, wondering, half-questioning, but exalted look in her eyes, as she looked up at him to thank him; then a flush came slowly over her face and neck as she moved forward and took the hand each of Brewster and Whitney.

"We are going to run off," she said softly, "Henry and I. There is no earthly reason why we should not, and no one to question why we should, so"—she smiled a whimsical little smile—"we're going to run off to give our wedding a touch of romance; but"—she nodded her head emphatically at Morton and then at Brewster and Whitney—"I won't be married unless

you two are there to give us your blessing."

"Why, Susanne," Brewster spoke up, his head held high, and with as near a reproduction of his old gay tones as he could command, "you don't know anything about Henry Morton. You are not even acquainted with him. It's not decent."

But Whitney said nothing. His face was pale, and his lips were compressed. Susanne, however, shook her head sweetly, and put her hand out to Morton's, while he laughed delightedly and, taking it in his, said: "Come."

"Come," she said, and drew them toward the door, all except Brewster, who hung back obstinately.

"I'm not going," he objected. "I won't go to your old wedding. I'm going uptown to condole with Joan."

"Joan, you goose," said Susanne, "is waiting at the church now."

As they left the room, Ingram and Duane stood still for a moment or two looking down at the cards, then they looked up at each other and laughed.

"I'd have given anything not to have made that first discard. I never would have done it except to follow the agreement. Whitney would have made that game just by that discard; but it was really Brewster's game."

"It was nobody's game," said Duane, remembering the faces of the two men as they walked away with Susanne.

But Whitney, standing at the elevator door for them all to step in, put his hand affectionately upon Brewster's shoulder, remembering, in a sort of flash, that evening at the theatre and something Brewster had said:

"Life is a protest, quieted by a compromise."



IN MUSICLAND

By William F. Armstrong




It is a mistake to fancy that practicality flies out at the window when ideality comes in at the door; the two may abide amicably under one roof-tree, but not often enough to make the majority successful.

Gaillhard was director of the Paris Grand Opéra when Madame Noria arrived there at the end of her first season, with the intention of singing. Ahead of her were registered twenty-five waiting sopranos, French born; graduated from the Conservatoire with various honors, and entitled, in consequence, to an appearance. France in such matters gives preference to her own.

Only an American, who has had to do things abroad, will quite grasp the situation, which to Madame Noria appeared, perhaps, before her arrival, not difficult. In reality, nothing could be nearer to it in simile than viewing from a height the streets of a strange city clearly outlined, and then descending only to be lost in their mazes, frequently running into that cul-de-sac which on the Continent they call "honored tradition."

Twenty-five sopranos were sitting comfortably, somewhere, awaiting a summons to sing at the Opéra; behind them stretched the routine of a fore-

most state institution, which meant rightful appearance at another foremost state institution of theirs, the Grand Opéra.

Behind her Madame Noria had three months of study in Paris, not at the Conservatoire, and one season with Colonel Savage's opera in America.

Her début was one of the earliest, undertaken at eighteen, in Gounod's "Faust"; voice, zeal, and enthusiasm fresh with youth. In that first season with Savage she had learned twenty rôles, rehearsing in the morning for the part she was to sing the next week, and, at night, appearing in the one she had learned in the week preceding.

"Only experience develops personality," is one of the axioms that it revealed to her.

To sing to Gaillhard in Paris was her ambition, with small prospect of gratification; his throne required prescribed ladders to scale to its altitude.

The single opportunity afforded by fixed rules lay for her in recommendation by a subscriber, and of these she knew none. Then she resolved on a move that later, when she frankly confessed it, aroused hilarity with the staidest officials.

"The subscribers' names were not hard to find in the printed list of them," said Madame Noria, with frank gayety, "and I chose the one most influential."

Gaillhard, on receipt of her letter containing the "recommending" name

chosen, promptly heard her, but explained that he needed a *Juliette* only, a rôle he had carefully found not to be in her répertoire.

In three months she had learned it. To his surprise, not expecting to be taken so literally, she came again for a hearing.

After the second act on her début night she was signed by him for a permanent engagement, offered, it seems, at the Paris Opéra in only two other instances to Americans, Miss Sybil Sanderson and Miss Mary Garden.

Meanwhile, and making the test of determination the harder, her family agreed only half-heartedly to her career, hoping always to hear that she had tired of it. The material side with her never meant the struggle that it has to so many; she was free to travel and to enjoy. To set aside these things, to first make opportunities, and then make use of them, when one is but nineteen, and life would seem to mean only a holiday, requires a rare kind of stamina.

Because of this stamina and her intelligence, Madame Noria bears to me a stronger resemblance than any other young singer to Madame Nordica, and to set limitation on the future place she will make for herself would seem rather haphazard.

One tireless aim of hers is: "To make an audience, not knowing the language of the libretto, feel its meaning, independent of dramatic action, through the color in my voice."

The old day when nothing more than a single beautiful tone quality and its shadings was required to carry a prima donna through three acts of battle, murder, and sudden death, is as a leaf from an outlived calendar.

In its present expression the voice must be not single but manifold. Without ability to grasp these manifold phases of utterance in their significance, and without an imagination strong enough to reveal them on open scene, no singer to-day can find an individual place on the stage.

The voice cannot live by abstract beauty alone, for abstract beauty is

needed only where that phase of beauty is required. For the rest, there must be color in it to illuminate every emotion.

The impatient fling of certain modern composers that a good singing voice is not necessary in their operas, has back of it the cynical meaning that the voice incapable of finding its own way to expression, even in ugliness, as well as its ultra opposite, is just as well not heard at all.

To lament at the situation is merely to show incapacity to meet living conditions. Those conditions mean a tremendous advance, for they mean that the entire range of emotion, and not a single abstract expression, must go to color the voice in its musical work on the stage.

A vast number, admiring the modern operatic writing, claim that old vocal standards should be adhered to in singing it, and with about as much judgment as a critic of painting who wails over a brush mark carrying forcefulness, which to him mars the nice smoothness of a canvas.

"Fancy an actor on the dramatic stage playing the tragedy of a lifetime in one single, beautiful tone of voice," is Madame Noria's keen summary.

Of certain conditions strongly of interest to American singers, Madame Noria states this from observation: "In Paris they give preference to their own, accepting the foreign singer only when needed. Here, formerly—aside from Colonel Savage, who has done more in opera for the American public and singers than any man—the American singer had first to have *proved* elsewhere that she was an artist before an appearance was allowed her. The foreigner, on the other hand, was taken for granted and accepted as an artist, sometimes to be discovered later by both public and manager, to possess no claim to the title.

"Now, American singers are coming into their own, and in this movement Mr. Gatti-Gazzaza has done more than any one preceding him at the Metropolitan. He questions neither whether the artist is a foreigner or an American;

he measures them side by side, and engages the better. There is with him no taking of the American's status as a something requiring peculiar reasoning.

"Another point with him is this: He does not hesitate for foreign decision in giving unreserved honors to an American; Madame Homer, for instance, he pronounces the greatest living *Amneris*.

"In Italy, France, and Germany, it is the public that makes the artist; everywhere it is the public that stands as final judge of the singer.

"In America the public does not seem to know its power. And in America the public is many times more capable than is the public abroad to pronounce an opinion—it has heard greater singers.

"Once absolutely realizing its power in casting final opinion, that realization would mean to the American that a reputation could be made as surely, and certainly more quickly at home, than if obliged to first prove her status to other nations before she began gradually to impress it upon her own."

The Italian saying of "What will be, will be" is sufficient where the blue bowl of the sky is running over with sunshine, and the world is so utterly glad simply in living that work and ambition go wandering away to less favored doors.

But the strain of fatalism somehow has everywhere its justification; surroundings possess a trick of so often fitting themselves to the need of the man, and presently making him.

When John MacCormack, unsteady of leg, as legs at the age of three provokingly will be, made his way next door to the Marists' monastery in County Athlone, he was taking a step as mystic as *Siegfried's* in search of the dragon. And as innocent of consequence as was *Siegfried* himself on that mythological morning when his fate was thenceforth to be that of a tenor.

There is a saying, not inept, as we know, that when three Germans meet they furnish four differing opinions;

but where one Irishman is assembled there is not unlikely to emanate a thousand unalterable theories. One of these in the mind of John's father of County Athlone was that discipline should begin early, and that the school bench fostered it better than any home circle. Having no large initiative at three, John submitted.

Youth never realizes the big humanity back of things, or that mothering is not exclusively a maternal prompting. When that morning, with his big Irish eyes and a brogue as winning, the boy made his way into the monastery school room, he made his way at the same moment into the heart of Brother Hugh, which, up to that time, had been occupied largely by music.

There were forenoons of Latin, and afternoons of history, the latter, to be perhaps exact, mainly Irish, but between them was song, whether sacred or secular seemed of small difference to this newest pupil. His pipings caught the quick ear of the brother, and presently, in that very first year of learning what discipline meant, and before he quite knew what they called it, the boy had learned "do, re, mi."

Time grew, and his knowledge of the solid old Gregorian music grew with it, tempered by folk songs that with the Irish come, also, quite near to being sacred. All this combined as a prelude to one festival morning when the bishop came for a visit, and John, progressed to seven in learning and discipline, was lifted onto a table to sing to his eminence, though the selection, "Absence Makes the Heart Grow Fonder," was, perhaps, scarcely clerical.

You can picture the scene for yourself; Brother Hugh in the very back row of listeners, because of the intimate personal share that he felt in the day's vocal glory.

Though the good Irish heart has more chords in it than the harp of Erin itself, in his youthful unacquaintance with emotion, John received the bishop's warm words, and inevitable penny, with but one pleasurable impulse—what the latter would buy.

"And after getting it," as he confessed in the telling, "it really did not much matter to me what he said."

Three years more, making seven, in all, he studied with the Marists, for he was ten when he left them. And in those years he had the only vocal training that he has received, beyond a few suggestions that Savona gave him later in Italy. In addition to this he carried away with him into the world a remarkably solid schooling in Latin, which, by some instinct, perhaps inherited, he had a predilection for pronouncing as if it were Italian; he knew the glories of Ireland in history, as well as in song.

But the trace of it all is unalterable. Of the tenors yet clear of the horizon, he appears the most unsophisticated in a sense of boyishly genuine freshness; the world to him seems such a good place to live in, if only he honestly pleases it.

So the father of County Athlone may in his theory of discipline not have had one too many.

It was the open, the fresh green about him, and the Shannon that gave the relieving color of life to MacCormack's boyhood, the River Shannon which Irish tradition says is full of fish. "And I would sit up all night on its banks, and catch nothing but rain," says MacCormack. "If the night happened fine, so much the better; only then, I caught nothing."

The Irish turn of a phrase, the hint of a brogue, are but outward paraphernalia of his make-up. Beneath these his every impulse and emotion are as genuinely Irish as if his heart were made of shanrock.

Because of these very inbred national traits the Italians understand him, though he and they might never agree on the fact. But at Santa Croce they both proved its truth one night when he sang to them in Gounod's "Faust."

Santa Croce, on those maps that have room for it, may be found near Florence; its inhabitants number four hundred; its opera house is a family foyer. Intimate terms do not soften sudden impulse toward their singers.

One bad note in an aria, otherwise full of good ones, brings down maledictions.

That night, not feeling quite in good voice, physically or in imagination, MacCormack had overwhelming anxiety for his high B in the second act. *Marguerite* was coming out of the church, and already moistening her lips to sing the phrase answering his. In terror of what might come in the audience if B did not on the stage, he turned and fled the scene; without knowing why, the chorus ran after him. The orchestra stopped. Explanations ensued; in the usual occult way they filtered through to the audience. "What! Afraid to give them high B, when all his high Cs had been good ones?" Enthusiasm shook stray candles loose in their sockets. Reassured by degrees, he came back.

After that he might have sung every note in the scale out of kelter. He had done what three hundred and ninety-nine of themselves would have done under identical symptoms. And they loved him for it, they being Italians and he Irish.

Gayety and democracy make Karl Jörn a good comrade, and the response that those qualities found in America had likely more influence in his desire to become an American citizen than anything else that he found here.

"Why should I mind always traveling alone," is his theory, "when every one, everywhere, is so friendly?"

But the man who travels with both ears willingly open must have enough sense of humor to carry him over thrusts unintentionally personal.

With Jörn a crowning test in this came one night in a Continental city after the performance. As was natural to a native of Riga, a samovar invited the incident. Its broad, polished surface glowed in friendly radiance through the little restaurant window; a cup of tea from it meant warmth, rest, and memories of home—at that moment three things which seemed needed.

The steam from the samovar looked good, the tea tasted better, and the

host, alone, for the night was stormy, was, perhaps, to one of Jörn's social spirit, best of all. But the tenor had the advantage; the restaurateur's past, present, and future were told in shelves, tables, and chairs; his artistic proclivities were sounded by disks in a mechanical instrument that presently pealed out in marches and other orchestral selections, when tea and personal confidences both seemed near a finish.

"Would you like something operatic?" was suggested, and Jörn answered: "Yes."

When it came, the voice was his own, and the disk, screwed too high, made the aria's climax C where B was intended. Flurried objections were silenced, the host wanted to listen, if his guest did not.

When it was ended, remonstrance over the pitch turned to argument. Each man felt assured he was right. Thinking to prove his side of it, Jörn sang the high B of the original without influencing things in the least, for his host liked high C better. Then, to clinch it, Jörn sang the whole aria from start to finish in the right key. When he was done, the restaurateur said: "With your voice, you, too, might make a singer."

And Jörn, preferring the joke to the better side of the argument, said only: "Good night."

What the Forum was to ancient Rome, the Hofbrau-haus is now to Munich. "New days, new ways" have found the palace supplanting the dingy old building fully congenial, though to one who knew the latter in all its picturesque friendliness the former must seem a scant substitute.

Jörn, traveling alone to find "all so friendly," was not disappointed that night at the new Hofbrau. Not having sung in Munich, he felt his identity unknown.

The place was crowded; it was one of those moments known in German, to translate literally, as of "beer-soulfulness." Moved more by inspiring impulse than discretion, one of a group climbed onto the nearest table and burst

into song. His effort so impressed Jörn with its incapacity that he climbed up himself merely to show that in all situations the standard of musical taste must be upheld. After the first bars of *Walter's* "Prize Song" from "*Meistersinger*," stone mugs were set softly aside; at its end the men jumped up, cheering.

Jörn, frightened at what he had done, when he had done it only to prove that bad music should not have good encouragement, climbed down to make his way home, anxious, for obvious reasons, to keep his name to himself. Near the door a friendly stranger said to him: "The stage at Altoonah is small."

Jörn, recalling this unhappy truth, said only: "Why?"

"And once when they gave Mozart's 'Magic Flute' there, a zealous stage manager crowded it so that the tenor, running out, fell over a bench."

"How?" returned Jörn, trying to appear mystified.

"On his head," was the literal rejoinder, "and laughter shook his legs in the air until he got on his feet again. That took sense of humor——"

"I tell you what happened once to a man I know well," Jörn interrupted, wishing attention and identification both diverted. "It was in 'Der Freischütz' in the scene where the *Bad Hunter* wants to mould bullets. The man——"

"You know well?"

"I know well—took a hat from the table, put it on his head, found one there already, and in his trouble made an exit, carrying both."

"I saw you *that* night, too."

"How? *You?* But to-night—please don't mention I'm—Jörn."

"Not for worlds! It's too late to be news."

"But——" Jörn turned. Recognition beamed on him broadly from all quarters. It was too late to be news.

"Every one, everywhere, is so friendly," he said weakly.

"Yes," was the rejoinder, "to a man as democratic as you."

A QUESTION OF STANDARD

BY OWEN OLIVER



I AM not a man to wait for things, but I waited three months after Alice Norrington came into our little circle before I proposed to her; waited till we were the greatest friends and met each other every day. She was not like other women. I did not know if her busy life included marriage in its programme, and I was sure that she rated freedom high.

One evening we were sitting over the fire at her mother's, and her charm overwhelmed me. I told her that I loved her, and asked her to marry me. She did not seem surprised.

"If you wish it," she said, after a moment's hesitation.

"I wish it if you wish it," I told her. "If you love me, and not unless. Do you, Alice?"

She sat with her elbow on the chair, and her chin on her hand, and her eyes on me. She looked a trifle flushed, and perhaps a trifle wistful.

"I don't know," she confessed at last.

"Then I do," I told her. I fear that I spoke bitterly.

"Don't be angry, Bob. I like you very much; far better than any 'unrelated man.' If you only ask me to marry you, I can say 'yes'; indeed I must say 'yes,' if it is the price of retaining your friendship. I don't know if that is loving by your standard; and I don't seem to have one of my own. I have never experimented in the subject. Anyhow I feel that I can marry you. Isn't that enough?"

"There was a woman in my native

place," I said, "who was going to marry a man. On the way to the wedding she tore her dress. She insisted on going back home to have it mended. As a result she arrived at the church after marrying hours. She said that she would marry him the next day. He retorted that she wouldn't! They set different standards."

"I would not slight you for many dresses, my friend," she protested gently.

"Friend is the answer," I declared.

"I suppose so." She sighed. "It rests with you. As I said, I like you; if that is not enough——"

"Not nearly enough," I answered unflinchingly.

"I am not even certain that I do not love you," she added. "I had expected that love would be different, but—I do not know."

"I know," I assured her; and she flushed decidedly and drew herself up.

"I evidently do not understand anything about it!" she remarked. "I should have thought that, if a man loved a woman, loved her by the exalted standard which you set up, and she told him that she liked him enough to be his wife—— It isn't my fault if I have no more to give—if I haven't. I don't know. Wasn't there a time when you didn't know if you loved me?"

"Never, from the time I first spoke to you. No. You don't love me, Alice. We will leave it at that."

"And be friends?" she suggested a little unsteadily.

"We will be friends," I agreed, "when I have got over my—my per-

fectly unreasonable irritation, and my perfectly reasonable hurt."

"I almost wish I had told you a lie," she declared. "I hate hurting you. You are so much more to me than my other friends. I am sure of that!"

I did not see Alice for several days after this. Then we met at a dinner. I went up to her and talked as usual; but I did not stay with her quite so long as had been my custom. My sister, Edith, noticed the few minutes less. She always mothered me, though she was many years younger. She spoke to me about it, when I called at her house the next afternoon.

"Aren't you and Alice friends?" she asked.

"Alice and I are—friends," I answered. "That is the exact relationship."

Edith rearranged some flowers, spilt the water, laughed her childish laugh.

"She likes you, Bob," she said, without turning round.

"Yes," I agreed. "She—likes me. You express the situation exactly."

"People set such different standards of loving." She seemed to be speaking to herself, but I knew that she understood how things were with us, and how I felt about them.

"I don't think you and I do," I replied. "You good little lover!"

Some people smile at Edith's adoration of her husband. "She is like a very little child with a very big father," our aunt once said. "If she breaks her toys, 'Dick will put them right!'"

"Yes," Edith agreed more soberly than usual. "You and I are good lovers. But, Bob dear, people aren't all alike; and if they give us their best? Of course, Dick is an old fish! He isn't such a cold-water creature as some people think, though. I know he isn't sentimental; but he's just as fond of me as it's in him to be; and twenty times fonder than he is of any one else. I'm very happy, Bob; and so would you be with Alice. If I were you I'd marry her."

"You assume a great deal," I observed.

"She'll marry you, if you ask her," Edith asserted.

"Umph!" I said, and rose to go; but Edith wouldn't release me.

"You know that is so," she declared.

"Yes, if you must interfere," I said ungraciously. "I know."

"You mean that you won't ask her?" Edith challenged me.

"Yes," I admitted. "I mean that."

I met Alice at the tennis club the next afternoon. She was particularly nice to me, and of course I talked to her sufficiently to avoid remark; but I did not walk home with her. I am afraid that I was piqued and ill-tempered, and felt a pleasure in hurting her just a little. Of course, nothing on earth would have induced me to hurt her much. At the back of my unreasonable disagreeableness, however, I had a more rational motive. I did not want her to marry me for mere liking and kindness; and I felt sure that, if I did not drop our close friendship, it would come to that.

The next time we met, she spoke out frankly.

"If I am to lose your friendship," she said, "I am very grieved."

"You will never lose that, Alice," I said. "I find it too hard on me, at present, to be with you. It feeds the flames, you know. I shall go away for a bit; and then, perhaps, we can meet on the old terms again. But I'm—I'm afraid not."

We looked at each other for many seconds.

"It isn't that I won't pay the price for your friendship," she said. "It is you who won't take it. I am ready to give all that I have to give, Bob; and perhaps——"

"Ssh!" I said. "That is just what I am so afraid of! You'd rather tell fibs than hurt me. Good old chum! No. I'll go away, dear, thank you."

I went. Edith was very angry with me, and said that I was acting like a baby. "Take her and make her love you," she cried; "if she doesn't already, and I believe she does! You—you—— Oh! To think that I should have such an owl for a brother!"

I was rather angry with Edith; but the squabble ended by her flinging her arms round my neck and hugging me. Our quarrels have ended like that ever since I was a big boy and she was a little girl—a particularly naughty little girl. I always wanted a wife like that hot-hearted little sister of mine. I could never understand how she came to marry such a quiet, undemonstrative chap as Dick, though I don't know a better man, or one who studies his wife more.

I went abroad for six months and rubbed shoulders with many people. I learned a good deal during my trip; but the piece of knowledge which impressed me most was that, of a hundred women or so whose acquaintance I made, there was not one to compare with Alice. She was planned on a larger scale than other women somehow. She always struck me as a gracious princess, moving among the lesser fry without losing her gentleness in her dignity, or her dignity in her gentleness. She did a man's work and earned a man's wage, and yet she remained essentially feminine; but hers was femininity that did not run to sentiment. I sometimes thought that a sixteenth of warm Irish blood would have made her perfect.

I went to see her directly I came back. Our friendship demanded the call. I dreaded going because I wanted so much to see her. I found that absence had not cooled the flames. I thought that I remembered her so well, but memory was pale beside the living Alice, the beautiful, smiling, frank woman, who gave me both her hands.

"How glad I am that you are back," she cried. "I have missed my familiar friend so much. There is no doubt about my friendship."

"Or mine," I acknowledged. I pressed her soft warm hands for a moment. They sent a fire through me. It was I who let them go. She did not attempt to remove them. She had decided to marry me, if I asked her again; I knew—I knew her so well. She was incapable of exciting false hopes by kindness; and she was sure

to have thought the matter out and to have decided upon her course of action. Her decision was obviously to try to make me happy. Probably she had even decided to pretend that she loved me beyond friendship; and she would keep up the pretense all our lives; but all our lives I should know the difference. I would rather marry another woman who loved me less, I told myself. I should want no more from her; but from Alice I wanted everything, and nothing else would ever satisfy me. So marriage meant nothing but unhappiness for both of us; and the only escape for me was to run away.

I told Edith that I thought of going abroad again; and she worried a deal about it; and in due course she passed her worry on to Dick. It is her custom, and I know the formula.

She goes and sits on the arm of his chair, and adjusts his tie, and ruffles his hair, and pats it down again. "Now, Dickie," she says, "you placid old iceberg. I've got boiling worries, and I'm going to pass them on to you to freeze in your icy old brain. They won't be my business any more, so I shan't worry about them. They'll be your business, and you *can't* worry about anything; but I expect you to dispose of them. That's what I married you for—you old fish!"

The curious thing is that she really does not worry about them after that; and that Dick takes them over and considers them conscientiously, even makes notes of them, and disposes of them punctiliously, great and small—usually small. He never neglects them, however busy he may be; and he is a very hard-working lawyer.

I don't know if he made a note of my case, but he came round to see me. He talked about stock markets and elections and such matters at first. Then he gave me an especially good cigar, and praised my whisky—he doesn't care for alcohol in fact. When he considered that I was brought to a sufficiently amiable state of mind, he approached business.

"Edith is a bit worried about you," he observed casually.

"Has she passed it on?" I inquired—also casually.

"Yes. I was a bit concerned about you previously, to be candid, only—one doesn't like to interfere, you know. I don't know if you'd mind talking it over. You see, if you don't, Edith will talk to you and give it to me second-hand."

We laughed those fictitious laughs with which men gloss over a "situation."

"Very well," I said. "You can have it first-hand. 'I'm in love with Alice. Alice is very friendly; friendly enough to marry me, if I insist. I don't, for good and sufficient reason. She is not in love with me. I want to marry a lover, not a friend. I consider the argument unanswerable.'"

He knocked the ash of his cigar carelessly.

"The argument is all right," he conceded, "but one of the premises is doubtful. I think Alice *is* in love with you. Different people have different ways of loving; or different ways of showing their affection. It is a question of standard."

"Exactly," I said curtly. "She may be in love with me by *your* standard. She isn't by mine."

He smoked for some time. Then he got up and stood with his back to the fire.

"You don't think my standard very high," he suggested.

"I think that my standard is different from yours," I asserted. "I know your standard, Dick."

"What you set up for mine," he said after a pause. "What I let you set up for mine, if you choose to put it that way. I always was—well, confoundedly shy in my way, you know." He laughed a little. Shyness seemed a strange attribute for this cool, confident, big man. "Well, I'm meddling with your feelings. I'll show you mine. There isn't a time when Edie comes dancing into the room that I don't feel that—that God's sunshine comes in with her. There isn't a night that I lie down or a morning that I wake up that I don't thank God for

her. There isn't a foolish thing she does—she's always doing them—that I don't love in her. There isn't a tiresome little way of hers that I could bear to see altered. I don't give as much anxious thought to my biggest cases as I give to the little worries that I set right for Edith. Now you know, and I feel a precious fool!"

"You're a good chap, Dick," I said. "I'm glad you feel about her like that, jolly glad."

"I shouldn't wonder," he observed, "if Alice feels like that about you. She isn't a sentimental schoolgirl, you know. She's had to earn her own living since she was seventeen or eighteen. So have I. It knocks the sentiment out of you—or knocks it inside. That's it, I expect. I don't know any woman in her circumstances who has kept so absolutely womanly. My dear chap, she's far too much a woman at heart to marry you if she doesn't love you. It isn't a question of standard. It's just—just a matter of nomenclature. She calls the thing friendship. You call it love. You'd better talk it over with her. She'll probably agree to call it what you like."

"Yes," I said. "Yes. That's it. She'll *call* it what I want, but it isn't. I'm beyond argument, old man. Now, let me give *you* a piece of advice. Did you ever tell Edie what you've told me?"

"Good gracious, no!" He grinned. "She'd chaff my head off."

"She'll tell you," I said firmly, "that you've given her the most ecstatic moment of her life. Go and tell her."

I believe she told him that his news was no news at all, and she had known it all along. I believe that she also made him tell her about fifty times. Anyway, she must have been off her mad little head with delight to do the wicked and mendacious thing that she did. I don't know exactly how she did it, but the result was that Alice called at my aunt's house the next morning and asked to see me. She drew the chair which I gave her up to mine, and leaned forward with her hands on my knees.

"Bob," she said, "seven months ago you told me that you loved me. Have you altered?"

"No," I said.

"Not at all?"

"Not at all," I admitted, "but——"

"Hush! You asked me if I loved you. I said that I did not know. My feeling seemed quieter than the feeling that one reads about in books. It isn't quiet *now*, Bob, now that you are poor and in trouble."

"But——" I began. At that stage I began to see Edith's wicked little hand. I wasn't poor, and I wasn't in trouble—except about Alice!

"Hush! I must tell you, and I will. I feel that I *must* stand by you; that, if people say things against you, I shall want to kill them; that if you won't take my little possessions to help—you *shan't* interrupt—I'll throw them in the sea; and I *will*." She seized my hand. "If you won't let me fight the trouble

through with you," she said, with a sob, "I think my heart will break."

"Dear," I said, "there will be no troubles now."

It was ten minutes before I thought to tell her that there had never been any but the one.

"The others," I said, "are an invention of Edith's." She had not mentioned my bad little sister, but I had no doubt as to the inventor.

"I haven't lost a cent, Al, and I'm not in an entanglement of any sort, except a very recent and very pleasant one. I have no troubles to fight, but perhaps they'll come."

"Well," said Alice, "I will help you fight them, when they do!"

They do not seem to come; but perhaps that is because things that seemed troubles once are troubles no longer. It is a question of standard; and I have a braver outlook upon life with Alice by my side.



MY GUEST

I PRAYED of Sorrow: "Wait a little space
Before I come to sit and talk with you;
For duty calls to me from every place;
There is so much my hands alone must do.

"Since you are here, obeying some decree,
I would most fain commune with you at length,
Yet crave a narrow interval, for see,
These tasks claim all my slender store of strength."

So Sorrow kindly drew herself aside,
Acceding graciously unto my will;
Through days that throbbed with life's assailing tide
She bided with me, patiently and still.

When years of burden sternly bade me rest
(With snow-flecked locks and labor-fretted brow)
I spoke unto my uncomplaining guest:
"Come, Sorrow, you will find me ready, now."

With smile as tender as the dawn of May
She said: "Since duty left you never free,
My sister, Sorrow, went, long since, away,
And I am Memory—come sit with me."

HARRIET WHITNEY DURBIN.



PLAYS AND PLAYERS

A FIRST NIGHTER

Playwrights bent on threshing out the causes of domestic misery and unrest. By a peculiar coincidence Ethel Barrymore, now a mother, returns to the stage in a play dealing with a tragedy due to the absence of a child. Mr. Pinero's "Mid-Channel" and her beautiful acting in it. If you have tears to shed "Madame X" will provide the opportunity. Dorothy Donnelly and William Elliott score. Charlotte Walker in "Just a Wife," a play by her husband, Eugene Walter. "Alias Jimmy Valentine" clever melodrama, with H. B. Warner as an admirable hero. "The Arcadians," most charming of musical plays. "The Jolly Bachelors," elaborate and nondescript.



WE have suddenly grown dreadfully serious in the theatre. Marital mistakes, flagrant infidelity, the domination of the male, the subjugation of the female—these have been the "pleasant" themes of the more important dramas of the month. One of the first plays to be produced this season was "Is Matrimony a Failure?" which was supposed to carry an answer in the negative. Ever since, our playwrights seem to have been set on proving the affirmative of the proposition. Lately, it has been their one obsession, and from Pinero abroad to our own Eugene Walter at home we have had the seamy side of the domestic problem. Is there no brighter side? Apparently not, if the playwrights may be trusted.

Any work from Mr. Arthur Wing Pinero takes on importance from the mere fact that he has written it; he is to-day the foremost of English dramatists. And his "Mid-Channel," produced at the Empire, besides being a

remarkably interesting play, in spite of its unilluminated gloom, has the added interest of serving for Ethel Barrymore's return to the stage to play her first rôle since she became wife and mother. Curiously enough, then, this play, in which Miss Barrymore reveals deeper skill than ever, deals with a tragedy that has as its origin the childlessness of a most unfortunate married couple. It is an illustration of the contrasts between the player at home and the player in the theatre that Ethel Barrymore-Colt, now radiantly happy in the joys of motherhood, comes back to the stage to act as her first rôle this woman of Mr. Pinero's play who lifts her voice in bitter wailing at thought of the defeated maternal instinct.

After seeing "Mid-Channel," one still has doubts about *Zoe Blundell's* fitness for the rôle of mother; but, as Miss Barrymore has said, Pinero himself, seeing the woman as she is, would have no right to judge. What she is in the play gives little hope that she would have been much better under other and more favorable conditions.

But, on the other hand, with children dependent on her interest, and to interest her, she might have been another person.

Zoe Blundell, at any rate, has no doubts upon the subject. She is, or she thinks she is, a born mother. And because everything had to be sacrificed to the career of ambition and prosperity, she has not been allowed to have any children. She states the matter with absolute clearness to her husband. "Our marriage," she says, "was doomed from the very moment we agreed that we would never be encumbered in our career with any brats of children."

The title suggests another grave defect in modern marriage. A social philosopher lives and moves in the play, a certain *Peter Mottram*, who is *Theodore Blundell's* partner in the stock exchange, and he is perpetually instructing his friends as to what they have either done or left undone. He remarks that midway between Folkestone and Boulogne—mid-channel—there is a shoal. There is broken water over this shoal, and passengers begin to feel a little uncomfortable until it is passed. So also in matrimony, there is a ridge or shoal in mid-channel. The first illusions have worn away; familiarity has bred something not very different from contempt; and a sense of boredom and ennui has sprung up, more than a little difficult to endure. The husband has ceased to be a lover; the wife has become less of an idol, and has not yet attained the complacent security of being a friend. Married people must look out for this mid-channel shoal. If they can once pass it over, all is well. Only the world is an impatient one, and men and women are too much in a hurry to think that they have made a mistake and that they must try another kind of existence.

Theodore and *Zoe Blundell* have been married for some fourteen years, and they are not happy, despite the sage counsels of the *Honorable Peter Mottram*. *Zoe* has a number of "tame robins," as she calls them, *Peter* himself being the elderly leader of the group, and the chief and most ardent devotee

being *Leonard Ferris*. Now, when one of many serious rows has taken place between *Theodore* and *Zoe*, and the husband has packed his bag and left the house, and the wife has determined to go abroad, it is, of course, *Leonard Ferris* who becomes the inseparable companion of *Zoe*. At an earlier moment, he had very nearly engaged himself to *Ethel Pierpoint*, a fresh and innocent girl, but at *Zoe Blundell's* bidding he is ready to leave everything else. Meanwhile, *Theodore*, in a flat in Cavendish Square, has consoled himself with a flighty *Mrs. Annerly*; and *Peter Mottram*, in his desire to mend the broken pieces, has a very difficult task before him. Nevertheless, he very nearly succeeds in reconciling the pair. *Theodore* sends *Mrs. Annerly* to the rightabout, and *Zoe* recommends *Leonard Ferris* to marry *Ethel Pierpoint*.

But the wounds are deep. *Zoe* might possibly forgive *Theodore* for his dalliance with *Mrs. Annerly*; but how could a man like *Theodore* forgive *Zoe* for the miserable confession which she makes to him of her relations with *Leonard Ferris*? And from this point the story moves on to its inevitable end. As *Theodore* will no longer resume the ordinary married life, *Zoe* goes back to *Leonard Ferris*, only to find that she has come too late, and that already her friend, *Ethel Pierpoint*, has been made a happy woman by the definite arrangement of a marriage. *Zoe* may be a "rotter," as she elegantly expresses it, but she is not such a "rotter" as to break into the happiness of a newly engaged couple. And so, from the high balcony of *Leonard Ferris's* flat, from which one has a view of lofty buildings; poor, hapless *Zoe* throws herself headlong into the streets, and *Peter* and *Theodore* and *Leonard* are left aghast.

Played in London by Miss Irene Vanbrugh, an exceptionally brilliant actress, but one whose personality and method generally repel sympathy, the play was not a prolonged success, but Miss Barrymore's presence in it here promises to give it longer life. In her case, it is easier to give the woman the

benefit of the doubt. Certainly, Miss Barrymore has never done anything to compare with her performance of *Zoe Blundell*, a rôle which is difficult and complex, and to which she brings not only her innate charms of magnetism and sympathy, but an informed, varied, and accomplished artistic method. The general cast is one of the best. Mr. Frohman has recently provided, with Charles Dalton repellently, yet properly, harsh and brutal as the husband, Mr. H. Reeves Smith earnestly philosophic as the friend, Miss Nina Sevening as that rare creature, a bad woman who would have the power to attract a man of ordinary common sense, and Mr. Eric Maturin as the fascinating and fascinated "tame robin," whose attention to the wife brings the ultimate bitter ending of the tragedy.

Domestic tragedy again in "Madame X," in certain respects one of the most astonishing plays that has been seen in several years, written by Alexandre Bisson—hitherto a frivol-loving French farceur—frankly melodramatic, and after an old familiar pattern; yet of such peculiar, cumulative emotion-inciting powers that men, as well as women, stain the New Amsterdam upholstery with tears. Peculiar, too, in this respect, that, though its heroine in the last analysis is not entitled to respectful sympathy—a point, by the way, which has called forth some very silly comment—you do not give that the least thought while shedding tears over the sadness of her plight and the remarkable final circumstances of her wretched, besotted, drug-ridden, and murder-stained career.

Under the name of "La Femme X," the play was produced at the Porte St. Martin, in Paris, and gave ample opportunity to Madame Jane Hading to prove the versatility of her talent. In London, where Lena Ashwell acted it, the end of the play came quickly. Here, it promises to endure successfully for many months.

The heroine, *Jacqueline Floriot*, is an unhappy woman, rendered desperate by cruelty and injustice, who, apparently, under other and happier circum-

stances, might have lived a peaceable and inoffensive life. But because she is driven from her husband's home on the charge of infidelity, she loses all self-respect, and sinks lower and lower in the social scale, until she becomes the mistress of a low scamp, one *Laroque*. Then, in her utter degradation, she takes to drink, and babbles in her cups of her past life and the period when she was respectable and comfortable as the wife in an honest household. Naturally, it occurs to *Laroque*, or, rather, it is suggested to him by a similar rascal, one *Perissard*, that a judicious application of blackmail might extract some money out of the heroine's husband, especially as the latter has been recently promoted to the presidency of the civil tribunal, and has a position of his own to maintain. But *Jacqueline*, besotted and miserable, yet cannot stoop to infamy like this. She cannot ask back the "dot" which she took to her husband on her marriage. She stoutly refuses to do what *Laroque* demands, and when he persists she shoots him. Her arrest and her refusal to plead anything in her own defense lead to the capital situation of the play.

A young barrister of twenty-four is assigned by the court as the woman's counsel, and in a speech of fiery eloquence, he does not hesitate to lay all the blame of the prisoner's degradation at the door of the husband, who, in his merciless pride and pharisaical self-righteousness, had driven his unhappy wife to her present life of squalor and wretchedness. And who is this stormy young advocate? He is none other than *Jacqueline's* own son, and the man he is denouncing is, consequently, his own father. Under circumstances so startling and strange, which appeal with such peculiar force to the sentimental aptitudes of a French jury, the woman is, of course, acquitted. But, of course, there is no possible future for a heroine of this kind, who, quickly, because every one must recognize the impossibility of any resumption of old ties with father and son, ends it all by a slow and much protracted death in court.

Two players come into special prominence as a result of "Madame X," or, as might be said with equal truth, help to bring the play success. One of them, Miss Dorothy Donnelly, in the title rôle, reveals most painfully and graphically the woman's gradual decline, her weakness, her infirm will, her natural tenderness and affection for her boy, her hatred of the husband whom she has wronged, but who, in her eyes, has wronged her even more. The other, Mr. William Elliott, remembered for his beautiful acting with David Warfield in "A Grand Army Man," dominates the courtroom scene by his fiery eloquence and seemingly intense emotion. The best of the other figures are provided by Harry C. Bradley, whose artistic playing gave value to a very small rôle, Malcolm Williams, and W. H. Denny.

In Eugene Walter's "Just a Wife," of which the title again suggests coincidence in the fact that it is the first appearance of the author's wife, Miss Charlotte Walker, in a play which he has written, the triangle making for domestic happiness is once more in evidence. Unlike the two plays previously under consideration, this one foreshadows a happy ending, as the love which is absent when marriage was contracted, appears to be in a well-developed stage when the final curtain falls. Mr. Walter has taken a rather remarkable case for the subject of his play, but it cannot be truthfully said that he writes with as much conviction as heretofore.

His heroine, *Marion Ashley*, knowing that her suitor, *John Emerson*, has been living with another woman, agrees to marry him for the sake of the luxury and comfort it will mean. On his part, he has had to contract the marriage to avoid a scandal, at once tells her that he does not love her, knows that she does not love him, and will leave her absolutely free to pursue life as she will. He keeps his part of the agreement, provides her with a beautiful home and every luxury, and studiously avoids intruding on her privacy. So much at least until the play

opens, when, quite unexpectedly, he comes, with his confidential man, to the Long Island home, saying that he is there to avoid a court summons. Later, it develops that he has grown restive and dissatisfied, a condition reflected in the wife's unhappy mood, as well. Then, the other woman, in a fit of hysteria and jealousy, pursues him to this spot, is bitterly denounced by him for intruding upon the wife, but is received by the latter with dignity and well-simulated courtesy.

A strong passage in the play deals with the resentment of the wife's brother, who denounces the husband, and is only prevented from attacking him by the interposition of a young Hebrew friend, whose presence on the scene is not too plausibly explained. The upshot of the matter is that the husband and his woman friend part forever, and the wife delivers herself of extended views upon love, marriage, and the relations of the sexes. Then the husband goes away, but there is a promise of his return with belated happiness for both.

The rôle of the wife is not always naturally written, but Miss Walker plays it with great sweetness and charm. The other woman in the case is denoted with emotional intensity by *Amelia Gardner*, while *Edmund Breese*, *Ernest Glendinning*, *Frederick Burton*, and *Bobby North* fill out a cast that is generally competent and interesting. As usual, Mr. David Belasco's hand is discernible in innumerable little, natural touches, and the two pictures, showing the exterior and an interior of the Long Island home, represent the most perfect scenic illusion possible.

A play of an entirely different character from any of these, and which owes its original inspiration to a short story of O. Henry's, is "Alias Jimmy Valentine," by Paul Armstrong, with a thief for its hero, and a most engaging thief at that. This is, in part, due to the cleverness of the playwright's melodramatic story, and, in large part, no doubt, to the attractiveness of H. B. Warner in the rôle. As in "Madame

X," a good deal of the effect depends upon coincidence; but of what melodrama is this not true? Here, at least, the general result is about two hours' entertainment, with only one of the four acts—the second—in which the mechanism is too much in sight.

Alias Jimmy Valentine is serving a long term in Sing Sing prison, when he is discovered there by *Rose Lane*, the beautiful young heroine, whom he had protected from a crook some time before. Having influence with the governor of the State, she secures the prisoner's pardon, after a scene in which various criminals give amusing exhibitions of their skill. After his release, he is tempted by his associates to embark again in the old life, but the girl's influence, opportunely manifested, saves him from himself, and he goes to Springfield, Ohio, to accept a position in a bank of which her father is the president. In the meantime, he is haunted with dread of a vengeful detective who is on his trail, determined to "land him" for a safe robbery, committed years before. His skill in such effort is unusual, as he is one of the very few criminals known to be able to get a safe combination through sensitiveness of touch. The detective arrives, and *Alias Jimmy Valentine* succeeds in evading arrest. But at that very moment a former pal of his, also reformed, and now watchman of the bank, rushes in with news that the president's little daughter has been accidentally imprisoned in the vault. She will suffocate, of course, unless there is prompt action.

Thereupon, the noble ex-thief, unaware of the fact that the detective is standing by, that in fact his one ambition has been to catch this man at work "red-handed," rushes into the bank, goes frantically to work, and releases the child in time.

This scene, carried forward on a darkened stage, with plenty of intensity, brings the play to an exciting end, and a happy one, of course, for the detective now relents. And, lest there should be a thought of deception, the heroine conveys a hint that she has al-

ways had a suspicion of the truth of *Jimmy's* previous occupation, so they may marry now without fear of subsequent disheartening disclosures. Mr. Warner is most attractively vigorous and natural as the thief, and Miss Laurette Taylor delightfully engaging as his sweetheart. Unless all signs fail, she will be a star before another season ends. Good figures are provided, also, by Edmund Elton, Frank Monroe, Edward Bayes, Charles E. Graham, and Earl Brown.

Another Englishman, Mr. Percival Knight, advanced from a minor part in another Frohman musical piece, has made the comic hit of "The Arcadians," the most delightful musical play shown here for several seasons, and one which, in its delicate charm, rhythmic melody, and generally felicitous style, goes far to prove that the slapstick method is not necessary for success, even in New York. "The Arcadians," all that their name implies, come to London to teach the English the art of true and honest living, but they are evidently forced to return to their sylvan abodes without having quite accomplished their philanthropic mission. Staged with much beauty of scene and costume, the piece has the added merits of a most tuneful score and a book that the average human being can comprehend. Ethel Cadman and Julia Sanderson divide honors among the women in the cast, and Mr. Knight is most amusing as a lugubrious jockey, with a motto, "always cheerful and bright." "The Arcadians" promises to stay out the season at the Liberty.

Of the other musical shows of the month, the most elaborate, "The Jolly Bachelors," is a handsomely staged, nondescript entertainment of much the same type as "The Midnight Sons," its predecessor at the Broadway, and is about as successful, Nora Bayes is the chief performer, though there are a number of other vaudeville specialists who contribute to the entertainment. Miss Bayes' song, "Has Anybody Seen Kelly?" is the one that almost everybody is humming as they pass into the street.

FOR BOOK LOVERS



Archibald Lowery Sessions

What is in store for readers of Ainslee's. Doctor W. S. Rainsford gives an excellent chronicle of hunting adventures in "The Land of the Lion." Gertrude Atherton has done a poor piece of work in "The Tower of Ivory." "The Seventh Noon," by Frederick Orin Bartlett, fanciful but interesting. Robert Barr has written a good adventure story in "Cardillac." Hopelessly tangled is Hallie Erminie Rives' "The Kingdom of Slender Swords." "A Court of Inquiry," by Grace S. Richmond, pleasant comedy. For those who like historical romance Warwick Deeping's "The Red Saint" will have interest



IN this number of AINSLEE'S, you will find the opening chapters of a new novel by Emily Post. "The Eagle's Feather" is a decidedly original variation of a theme

which is absorbing a vast amount of public interest and attention in these days, not only in fiction, but on the stage. We propose to run it in three parts, so as to give you the benefit of the story's interest compressed into as small a space as possible.

One long serial you already have in Harold MacGrath's "A Splendid Hazard," and we are assured by the character of the response that it has drawn from the magazine's subscribers and readers generally that no mistake has been made in securing this story for them.

We do not believe that there have ever been so many exceptionally good short stories printed in two numbers of a magazine as we have to offer you in this issue and its successor for May. You have probably, before coming to this department, finished your reading of the rest of this number, and if you have not forgotten everything else in your perusal of "The Thunderstorm,"

"The Outer Darkness," "The Man With the Yellow Streak," and "Dick Gets Into the Game," you must be in a morbid state of some kind.

But these stories are only appetizers for the feast that is prepared for you in the May number.

You will have, first of all, a complete novel by Edward Salisbury Field, called "The Sapphire Bracelet," a story of modern romance, with a flavor of mystery—it cannot justly be called a detective story—enlivened by a dialogue which is fully equal, in wit and cleverness, to the undying "Dolly Dialogues."

There will be another short story by the author of "The Thunderstorm," a Western story by Elia W. Peattie, a story of the power and interest that only Morgan Robertson can put into fiction, a story with the variety and vividness of coloring that are characteristic of Will Levington Comfort, and six others, every one of which is worthy of the highest possible consideration.

With all of the excellencies which are bringing to AINSLEE'S a continually increasing appreciation, there are good things in store for you during the year 1910 which will outshine even its present brilliance.

"The Land of the Lion," by Reverend W. S. Rainsford—formerly the rector of St. George's Church, in New York—published by Doubleday, Page & Co., is the latest of the chronicles of hunting adventures in British East Africa. It is not likely to be the last, if we may rely upon the promise of some noted sportsmen.

Doctor Rainsford's book is a good-sized volume, written in large part from his diaries and field notes. It does not seem to us that the author need have offered any apology to his readers for putting his narrative into this form, for we doubt whether it would have been possible to have made a more interesting story of his experiences by elaboration.

We imagine that every one who undertakes to hunt "big game" in East Africa will, in most of the essentials, encounter the same conditions, however much they may seem to differ in small details. Doubtless any one visiting the region for the first time, with no other knowledge than that gathered in the reading of books about it, would have the same impressions of familiarity with it that one does upon a first visit to London or Paris. We judge that methods of equipment, of organizing a "sefari" at Nairobi, and of selecting a route are more or less conventional by this time, so that there is not quite the same flavor of adventure about it all that there used to be.

Nevertheless, there was unquestionably the spice of danger in Doctor Rainsford's collisions with the lion, the rhino, and the buffalo; and, if he had not been a good shot, with the coolness and nerve of long experience, we might not have had the pleasure of reading his book.

He gives what sounds to a tyro like good advice about equipment and arms, and winds up his book with comments on the defects in the administration of the territory, and its wonderful possibilities, if wisely developed.



Gertrude Atherton's new novel, which, by the way, she has announced

will be her last, is one of unmitigated superlatives. It is a great pity that she should never have learned and put into practice Schlegel's rule that "in good prose every word is understood."

"The Tower of Ivory," published by the Macmillan Company, makes one feel like Emerson's "grave man, who, when urged to go to a church where a clergyman was being newly ordained, said he liked him very well, but he would go when the interesting Sundays were over."

Margarethe Styr is the heroine of this tale. She is a prima donna, not one of the ordinary type, like Patti, or Jenny Lind, or Nilsson, but one who dominates the stage, "not only by the magic of her great, golden voice and imposing height and presence, but by a force which the critics, after long and acrimonious controversy, agreed to be an emanation from the brain."

Her life in Munich, when she sings under the patronage of King Ludwig of Bavaria, is a secluded one. Some bitter experiences in the past, which she keeps shrouded in mystery, prompts her to shun the society of men, but she is finally lured, by the "virginal" charms of the youthful Mr. John Ordham, from her retreat, and an intimacy begins, the results of which the reader may guess.

Mr. Ordham is a younger son of an English nobleman. His presence in Munich is accounted for by the fact that he is in training for diplomatic honors and is engaged in adding a mastery of German to all of his other intellectual accomplishments. Mrs. Atherton is at much pains to impress upon her readers the fact that he is not one of the familiar type of young Englishmen. His tastes are all intellectual and artistic, but we are relieved to know that he is on the safe side of the line which divides high breeding from degeneracy.

The story is a poor piece of work. The machinery creaks painfully, and the style is strained and often slovenly. If, for instance, Mrs. Atherton had consulted a chemist, she would have avoided the mistake of producing a precipi-

tation as the result of combustion. Even "the fiery furnace of life" cannot leave a precipitation of mind.



Doubtless there will be some people who will find in Frederick Orin Bartlett's story, "The Seventh Noon," published by Small, Maynard & Co., a story of absorbing interest. And, on the other hand, there will be some jaundiced souls whose taste will be offended by what they are likely to call its wild improbabilities.

Mr. Bartlett scorns any sort of limitation to his fancy; he frankly relies upon invention for his theme, his plot, and its development. He makes no disguise of the fact that it is all deliberately manufactured.

As the title suggests, the action of the story is embraced within the short period of a week. Young Mr. Donaldson, whose short life has been a continued struggle with adversity, finds himself, in the laboratory of his friend, Doctor Barstow, unutterably weary of existence, ready to put an end to it. In the course of a discussion upon the justification of suicide, the doctor discloses his discovery of a new poison, the effect of which is to produce death in exactly seven days. Donaldson sees in this his opportunity, and surreptitiously gets possession of the vial containing it, and helps himself to a dose. He thereupon prepares for a thoroughly good time, turns all his resources into ready money, secures a suite at the Waldorf, and plans for a week of luxury.

Almost at the outset, however, he encounters a beautiful maiden in distress, and her troubles, which are of a rather unique character, create a diversion.

For a time, he is so keenly interested in relieving and consoling her and attending to her necessities that he forgets the crisis in his own affairs, threatened by the approach of "the seventh noon." But as it draws nearer, and he finds that he and the young woman have fallen in love, he naturally,

begins to realize that life is not, after all, such a barren waste as he had supposed.

The story is one of those with the despised "happy endings," the nature of which, in this instance, the reader can find out for himself.



"Cardillac" is the title of Robert Barr's new book, published by Frederick A. Stokes Company. Whether the author intended it as an historical novel, or simply as an unclassified romance, is not quite certain; and it is, perhaps, of relatively little importance. That it is an adventure story of the period of Louis XIII. of France is unquestionable.

The hero is Victor Cardillac, the son of an impoverished nobleman of Provence. The father had once befriended Charles d'Albert of Luynes, who, at the opening of the story, was, as mentor of the young king, the greatest power in France. With pardonable hope, therefore, the Marquis of Cardillac applied to this man in the interest of his son, and, upon the receipt of a favorable reply, the youth made the journey to Paris. His experiences there remind one of those of a majority of the army of office seekers who hopelessly journey to Washington after the inauguration of a new President. As the protagonist of the disappointed patriots of our own capital, he will be easily recognized by most District of Columbia politicians.

But opportunity knocked at his door—as it seldom does at theirs—and when he was nearly trapped, by the agents of the favorite, into making a murderous attack on one of the latter's enemies, the Duke de Montrenil, his fortune was made, strange to say.

It led to a series of adventures, which culminated in the liberation of the queen mother from her imprisonment in the Château of Blois, and the winning of Montrenil's beautiful daughter.

If the reader thinks that some of the

episodes are a little improbable, it would be well for him to recall D'Artagnan, Athos, Aramis, and Porthos, and to bear in mind that he lives in twentieth-century America, and that the lapse of centuries has changed possibilities into impossibilities.



Hallie Erminie Rives' new book, "The Kingdom of Slender Swords," published by the Bobbs-Merrill Company, is a very small thread of a story inextricably tangled in a mass of uninteresting description.

It is so hopelessly tangled that it is difficult to discover whether it is intended as a novel or a book on Japan. There are, it is true, numerous characters in the book, masculine and feminine, of the type usually found in fiction, and they do many of the things which trained readers of fiction would naturally expect of them. The good people, including a lovely American girl and a missionary bishop, make plans which the disreputable characters scheme to defeat; they fall in love, sometimes as they should and sometimes as they should not, a long-lost father turns up rather unexpectedly, the white man seeks to educate the native in some of his more or less reprehensible customs, and love and virtue finally triumph.

On the other hand, there are a good many words about Japan and the Japanese, introduced in such a way as to give an impression that the author wishes the reader to know that she has traveled in the land of the dragon, and has, at least, observed enough to give an intelligent and sympathetic account of the country and its people. A month or six weeks is long enough for an Englishman to understand and write up the United States, so why should it not be long enough for an American authoress to do the same for Japan?

If Mrs. Wheeler did not reason thus, she might have. At any rate, the result is the same. It is the twentieth-century way, and it saves time—for the author, if not for the reader.

Grace S. Richmond's new book, "A Court of Inquiry," published by Doubleday, Page & Co., is a story told by a charming widow, whose house three of her friends, denominated the Gay Lady—so called "because of her flower-bright face"—the Philosopher, and the Skeptic, have for the time being made their home.

"We four," declared the Skeptic, "constitute a private Court of Inquiry Into the Condition of Our Friends."

These friends, all of them young women, come in rotation to visit at the house, and unconsciously offer themselves as victims for more or less destructive criticism. Althea is the disorderly type. They find that she pins the back of her collar with a common brass pin, that she leaves her kimono in the middle of the floor, scratches matches on the wall—they counted twenty-seven marks—and left her curling iron on the white cover of the dressing table. Camellia dressed so well that she made the members of the Court of Inquiry feel like dowdies. Dahlia frightened the two men out of their senses by her persistent attentions. Rhodora was careless of her grandmother's comfort. Azalea had a beautiful voice, but was of no use to anybody when the cook fell ill.

Nevertheless, in spite of these shortcomings, uncovered by the Court of Inquiry, Dahlia got a Professor, Camellia a Judge, Azalea a Cashier, Althea a Promoter, and Rhodora a Preacher. The Gay Lady—who all the time was Hepatica—got the Skeptic, and Wistaria, the widow and hostess, got the Philosopher.

After the disclosures of the Court of Inquiry, we should be inclined to think that their more sensitive friends would hesitate before accepting an invitation to visit them.



Warwick Deeping has mitigated his eccentricities of style somewhat in his new book, "The Red Saint," published by Cassell & Co.

The scene of the story is laid in the

south of England, at the time of Simon de Montfort's revolt against Henry III. The climax of the tale is reached with a description of the Battle of Lewes, in May, 1264, in which the king was defeated and taken prisoner.

Denise of the Hermitage is the heroine of the story, the red saint. Just who she was or what she was it is hard to say. No details are given as to her parentage or connections. She lived alone in a hut in the forest, adjacent to the village of Goldspur, occupying herself by ministering to the poor and sick of the village, and practicing religion, though she seems to have had no ties of any sort connecting her with any of the religious orders.

Her extraordinary beauty attracted the attention of Aymery, the manor lord, who fell deeply in love with her, but she was not to be diverted from her chosen work, in spite of his pleading with her to become his wife.

This is the condition of her affairs when the barons' war breaks out and the country is overrun with the soldiers of both armies and the lawless characters, men and women, that followed them. Denise falls a victim to the brutality of one of the king's captains, and leaves her home, friendless and destitute. Her adventures, as she wanders from place to place, constitute the story. A considerable part of it is devoted to a description of her association with two women of the road, one of whom finally becomes her friend and protector, and is largely instrumental in

her reunion with Aymery. The latter is one of Montfort's lieutenants, and, naturally, his search for Denise is more or less desultory. He finds her at last, however, and succeeds in rescuing her, after the battle, from one of the king's soldiers.

The story has interest for those who like the historical romance, but being what it is, there is little chance that it will be an "epoch-making" book.



Important New Books.

"A Cavalier of Virginia," Theodore Roberts, L. C. Page & Co.

"The Ball and the Cross," Gilbert K. Chesterton, John Lane Co.

"Deep Sea Warriors," Basil Lubbock, Dodd, Mead & Co.

"The Living Mummy," Ambrose Pratt, Frederick A. Stokes Co.

"The Lantern Bearers," Juliet Wilbor Tompkins, Baker & Taylor Co.

"The Lost Face," Jack London, Macmillan Co.

"The Glory of His Country," Frederick Landis, Charles Scribner's Sons.

"The Master Girl," Ashton Hilliers, G. P. Putnam's Sons.

"White Magic," David Graham Phillips, D. Appleton & Co.

"Kings in Exile," Charles G. D. Roberts, Macmillan Co.

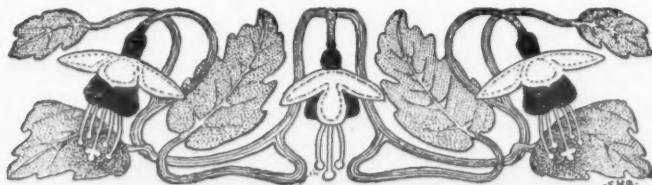
"The Duke's Price," Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Brown, Houghton, Mifflin & Co.

"The Man Outside," Wyndham Martyn, Dodd, Mead & Co.

"The Lifted Bandage," Mary R. S. Andrews, Charles Scribner's Sons.

"The Taming of Red Butte Western," Francis Lynde, Charles Scribner's Sons.

"The Fortune Hunter," Louis Joseph Vance, Dodd, Mead & Co.





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Do not wait until you build that new house which you may have in mind. See that your present home is warmed as you know it should be, and it will rent for 10% to 15% more, or sell quickly at a higher price when you leave it. IDEAL Boilers and AMERICAN Radiators are a high-paying investment—not an expense.



A No. C-241 IDEAL Boiler and 555 ft. of 38-in. AMERICAN Radiators, costing the owner \$950, were used to Hot-Water heat this cottage.

At these prices the goods can be bought of any reputable, competent fitter. This did not include cost of labor, pipe, valves, freight, etc., which installation is extra and varies according to climatic and other conditions.



A No. 3-22 IDEAL Boiler and 400 ft. of 38-in. AMERICAN Radiators, costing the owner \$105, were used to Hot-Water heat this cottage.

Prices are now most favorable, and you get the services of the most skillful fitters. Don't put it off till the soon-coming Fall—write us to-day for free valuable book which tells fully all the hows and whys of IDEAL-AMERICAN heating.

Public Showrooms
all large cities

AMERICAN RADIATOR COMPANY

Write to Dept. 39
CHICAGO

Tell the substitutor: "No, thank you, I want what I asked for. Good-bye."



For Sunday Suppers

Busy-Day Dinners

Hasty Luncheons

Unexpected Guests

Here is a dish that everyone likes—a food as hearty as meat—a meal that would take you 16 hours to prepare.

A dish that remains fresh and savory. It can be served hot or cold. The best meal of the kind that a chef ever prepared.

And your grocer supplies it—ready to serve in a minute—at about the cost of home-baked beans. Think what it means—in a hundred emergencies—to have a few cans of Van Camp's on the shelf.

And Van Camp's are baked in steam ovens. Not crisped, not broken—always nut-like, mealy and whole.

They don't ferment and form gas, as do home-baked beans, because the fierce heat has made them digestible.

The tomato sauce is baked into the beans, giving a delicious blend.

The result is baked beans at their best—beans made inviting. And as beans are 84 per cent nutriment—hearty, staple and cheap—they cut down the meat bills, in these days of high prices, when you serve beans that people like.

So Van Camp's are more than convenient.

The National Dish

Van Camp's

BAKED
WITH TOMATO
SAUCE

PORK AND BEANS

The National Dish

Van Camp's, as you know, outsell all other brands. And these are the principal reasons:

We use only the choicest Michigan beans—the whitest and plumpest. They cost us four times what some beans would cost.

We use only whole, vine-ripened tomatoes.

And our sauce costs five times what common sauce sells for.

This dish is our pride—the final result of 48 years' experience. Just compare Van Camp's with another brand, and see what our methods mean.

(39)

Three sizes: 10, 15 and 20 cents per can

Van Camp Packing Company, Established 1861 Indianapolis, Ind.

Tell the substitutor: "No, thank you, I want what I asked for. Good-bye."



**Built —
not Stuffed**

Look for the
label and the name
Ostermoor woven in the binding.

TRADE-MARK
Reg. U.S. Pat. Off.

The Mattress That is Built—Not Stuffed

Ostermoor \$15.

Ever Toss on Your Bed at Night?

Possibly you blamed yourself, or your dinner, instead of the guilty mattress. *But*—if the mattress *soothed*, you *wouldn't* toss, you'd *sleep*. Logical—*isn't it?* To put it another way—when you go to bed on an Ostermoor, you *do* sleep—because the Ostermoor *compels* relaxation. The moment you lie down the only consciousness you have is that of absolute comfort, and the sensation blends quickly into sound, refreshing slumber. One million people know this. The reason lies in the construction of the Ostermoor. Place four thousand sheets of filmy, downy cotton, *built (not stuffed)* into an evenly tufted, soft, elastic mattress, and you have a sleep producer miles ahead of the old-fashioned stuffed horse hair, or stuffed cotton mattress usually sold. Follow common sense—*sleep* on an Ostermoor.

Our 144-page Book with Samples—Sent FREE

The Ostermoor Mattress is not for sale at stores generally, but there's an Ostermoor dealer in most places—the livest merchant in town. *Write us and we'll give you his name.* But don't take chances with imitations at other stores—make sure you're getting the genuine Ostermoor—our trademark label is your guarantee. We will ship you a mattress by express, prepaid, same day your check is received by us, when we have no dealer or he has none in stock.

OSTERMOOR & CO., 174 Elizabeth St., New York

Canada: Alaska Pustler & Dene Co., Ltd., Montreal

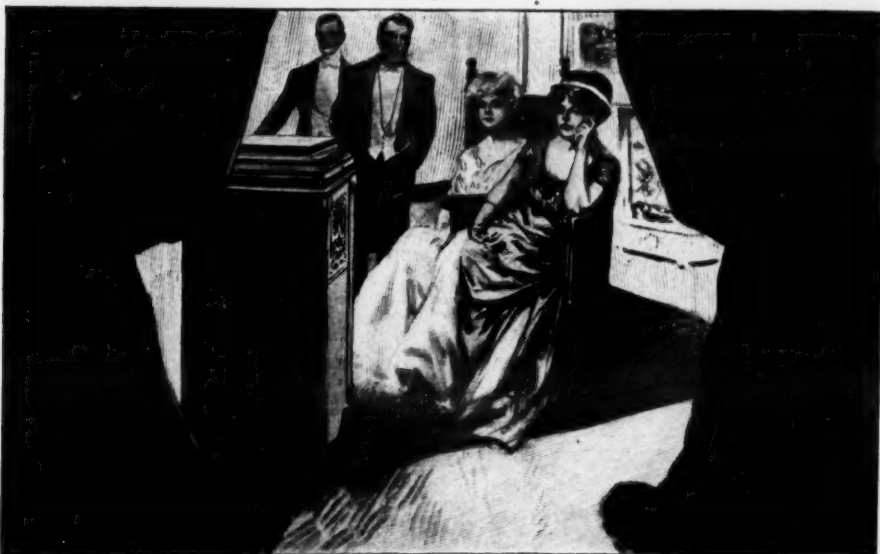
MATTRESSES COST

4 ft. 6 in., 45 lbs.	\$15.00
4 ft. 40 lbs.	13.35
3 ft. 6 in., 35 lbs.	11.70
3 ft. 30 lbs.	10.00
2 ft. 6 in., 25 lbs.	8.35

All 6 ft. 3 in. long
EXPRESS CHARGES PREPAID
In two parts, 50 cents extra

GOOD FOR A LIFETIME'S BED TIME

Tell the substitutor: "No, thank you, I want what I asked for. Good-bye."



The EDISON PHONOGRAPH would still be the greatest sound- reproducing instrument without the Amberola.

The Amberola would still be the final and greatest expression of the Edison Phonograph without Amberol Records.

Amberol Records would still be the greatest triumph in Record-making without Slezak and the other Grand Opera stars.

But when you can get Mr. Edison's own Phonograph invented and perfected by him,

and when you get in addition to that the Amberola, the finest form of the Edison Phonograph,

and when you can have to play upon the Amberola, or any type of the Edison Phonograph, the Amberol Records, the longest playing, clearest and best playing Records,

and when you can get upon Amberol Records such singers as Slezak, the giant tenor of the Metropolitan Opera Company, and other stars

can you think of buying any



sound-reproducing instrument until you have thoroughly investigated the Edison, the Amberola, Amberol Records and Edison Grand Opera Records?

We do not ask anyone to buy the Edison Phonograph and Edison Records on our mere statement. We merely ask you not to buy until you have compared the Edison with other instruments of the same type, Edison Records with similar reproductions on other records, the Amberola with other de luxe sound-reproducing machines, and our Grand Opera with other Grand Opera. We have no fear for the ultimate decision of anyone who will make these comparisons.

Thomas A. Edison invented the Phonograph, he has invented every tangible improvement in the Phonograph, and he is responsible for the excellence of the Edison Phonograph, the Amberola and the Amberol Records to-day.

There are Edison dealers everywhere. Go to the nearest and hear the Edison Phonograph play both Edison Standard and Amberol Records. Get complete catalogs from your dealer or from us.

Edison Phonographs.....\$12.50 to \$300
Edison Standard Records.....50c
Edison Amberol Records (play twice as long).....90c
Edison Grand Opera Records.....75c and \$1.00

NATIONAL PHONOGRAPH COMPANY, 38 LAKESIDE AVENUE, ORANGE, N. J.

With the Edison Business Phonograph you dictate at your convenience,
and the typewriting department does the rest

Tell the substitutor: "No, thank you, I want what I asked for. Good-bye."

2,365 Overlands On One Mid-Winter Day

On one day in February we received orders from dealers for the immediate delivery of 2,365 Overlands. The four Overland factories employ 4,000 men, yet this single day's orders meant three weeks' production. Thus the tide of demand—more markedly than ever—is turning to this matchless car.

We have already booked orders for many thousands of cars to be delivered in 1911. One dealer alone has ordered 3,500—the largest automobile order that ever was placed.

Those who know Overlands—who see what they are doing—are making sure of their future supplies.

Note What This Means

Here is a car but little more than two years old. Yet our contracts from dealers for this season's delivery amount to \$24,000,000.

Our enormous capacity—one car each four minutes—is taxed to the utmost even now, at this writing, with deep snow on the ground.

All because thousands of owners have told thousands of others that no car compares with this.

Because no car is so simple, so trouble-proof, and none gives so much for the money.

Because of the wonderful engine—the pedal control—the fact that the car almost cares for itself.

The features which bring this flood-like de-

mand to the Overland will also win you when you know them.

25 h. p. \$1,000 — 40 h. p. \$1,250

The cost of the Overland, tremendous production, has been cut about 20 per cent.

This year we give a 25-horsepower Overland, with 102 inch wheel base, for \$1,000. And a 40-horsepower Overland, with 112-inch wheel base, for \$1,250, with single rumble seat. Prices include lamps and magneto.

Buyers would willingly pay a great deal more to secure the Overland features. But you get them all at a lower price than any equal grade cars can be sold.

Get the Books

You should know the car which has become the king, in spite of a hundred rivals. You will find—like the rest—that it meets your ideals. We will send you two books—our beautiful catalog and "The Wonderful Overland Story"—if you simply send us your address. Cut out this coupon so you won't forget.

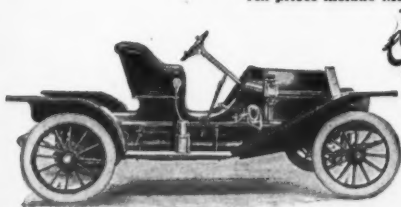
The Willys-Overland Company

Toledo, Ohio

Licensed Under Selden Patent

Please send me the two books free.

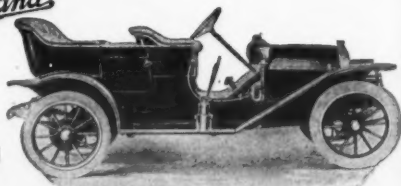
All prices include Magneto and full lamp equipment



Overland Model 38—Price \$1,000. 25 h. p.—102-inch wheel base. With single rumble seat, \$1,050—double rumble seat, \$1,075—complete Toy Tonneau, \$1,100.

The Overland

Two of the many Overland Models



A 40 h. p. Overland with 112-inch wheel base. Price with single rumble seat, \$1,250—double rumble seat, \$1,275—with 5-passenger Touring or Close-Coupled body, \$1,400.

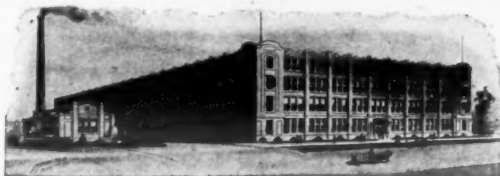


An Industry Become an Art

Above are pictured wearers of America's leading clothes.
Below, the country's finest tailoring institution—a plant where the industry of good clothes-making has become a fine art.

Adler-Rochester Clothes are designed and made by master craftsmen. To this is due their superiority of style, fit and finish.

The materials are the choice of each season's best fabrics—the finest weaves and the handsomest patterns—the richest, most fashionable shades.



The Adler-Rochester plant is a fresh air and sunshine institution—remarkable for its splendid equipment, its ideal working conditions. Thus is inspired the constant best effort of the

experts employed. And these conditions are reflected in every line, in every inner detail of

ADLER-ROCHESTER-CLOTHES

How the Prices are Possible

Nor do Adler-Rochester's cost more than other good clothes. \$18.00 and upwards are the prices. Yet we spend in the making four times what some makers spend. The utmost in time and skill is afforded every detail.

Such lavishness is possible only because we confine our profit to 6 per cent. And so it is that Adler-Rochesters are vastly greater in value than most other clothes.

It will pay you to make the Adler-Rochester acquaintance without delay.

Style Book in Colors—FREE

Through our Style-Book "F," you may learn what well dressed men will wear this season. Adler-Rochester Grays and Blues and other favored colors are beautifully reproduced. Yours for a postal card, and of immense interest. But please prove its facts to yourself.

Visit the leading merchant in your community—where Adler-Rochester clothes are sold. Try on a suit or overcoat—then judge them. For on their actual appearance when worn, is based their reputation—America's leading clothes for over 40 years.

L. ADLER BROS. & CO., Rochester, N. Y.



**Wind-
Roughened Complexions**
are prevented or relieved by the
application of soothing, healing

VASELINE COLD CREAM

**IN CONVENIENT, SANITARY
PURE TIN TUBES**
(Contain No Lead)

Different from others in that its
base is Vaseline, which is entirely
mineral and cannot turn rancid
or decompose.

So wonderfully absorbed by the
pores, it cleanses, heals and
beautifies; its daily use insuring
a clear, healthy skin.

This is but one of the twelve Vaseline preparations
that together form a safe and convenient medicine
chest for the treatment of all the little accidents
and ailments prevalent in every family.

WRITE for our FREE VASELINE BOOK
it tells you of the special uses for

Capicum Vaseline
Pure Vaseline
Carbolated Vaseline
Mentholated Vaseline
Vaseline Oxide of Zinc
Vaseline Cold Cream

Pomade Vaseline
White Vaseline
Camphorated Vaseline
Borated Vaseline
Perfumed White Vaseline
Vaseline Camphor Ice

CHESEBROUGH MFG. CO.

Proprietors of Every "Vaseline" Product

38 State St., New York

London Office
42 Holborn Viaduct



1910



Full Jewelled
(All ball-bearing)

Corbin Cars represent six years of
study and test of a Corbin Institution
and are of Corbin Quality.

Back of them is an organization
that has for over half a century stood
for high ideals in manufacture, a vast
engineering force, and a fixed policy
that everything should be done right.

Every vital part of the Corbin Car
is manufactured in our own plant—
a positive guarantee of the best ma-
terials and workmanship.

The 1910 car is a continuation with
certain minor refinements of the 1909
car that proved so satisfactory that
the demand far exceeded the supply.

30 H.P., 5-Passenger Touring Car,
\$2,750.00. Fully equipped, includ-
ing Cape Top, Prestolite Tank and
Bosch Magneto.

Write for descriptive Catalogue

**The Corbin
Motor Vehicle Corporation**
New Britain, Connecticut

Licensed under Selden Patent



Tell the substitutor: "No, thank you, I want what I asked for. Good-bye."



Salary Increases

Voluntarily Reported Every Month

If one thing more than another proves the ability of the International Correspondence Schools of Scranton to raise the salaries of poorly-paid but ambitious men and women—to raise **YOUR** salary—it is the monthly average of 300 letters **VOLUNTARILY** written by students telling of salaries raised and positions bettered through I. C. S. help.

YOU don't live so far away that the I. C. S. cannot reach you. Provided you can read and write your schooling has not been so restricted that the I. C. S. cannot help you. Your occupation isn't such that the I. C. S. cannot improve it. Your spare time isn't so limited that it cannot be used in acquiring an I. C. S. training. Your means are not so slender that you cannot afford it. The occupation of your choice is not so high that the I. C. S. cannot train you to fill it. *Your salary is not so great that the I. C. S. cannot raise it.* To learn how easily it can be done, mark the attached coupon.

A Salary Increase For You

Add to the three hundred students heard from every month, the other successful students not heard from, and you have some idea of the tremendous salary-raising power of the I. C. S. During January the number of students who reported success was 426. Mark the coupon.

Marking the coupon costs you nothing, and does not bind you in any way. An I. C. S. training can be acquired in your spare time.

Mark It
N-O-W!

SALARY-RAISING COUPON	
INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS Box 1199 Scranton, Pa.	
Please explain, without further obligation on my part, how I can qualify for the position before which I have marked X.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Bookkeeper <input type="checkbox"/> Stenographer <input type="checkbox"/> Advertising Writer <input type="checkbox"/> Show Card Writer <input type="checkbox"/> Window Trimmer <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial Law <input type="checkbox"/> Illustrator <input type="checkbox"/> Designer & Craftsman <input type="checkbox"/> Civil Service <input type="checkbox"/> Chemist <input type="checkbox"/> Textile Mill Supt. <input type="checkbox"/> Electrician <input type="checkbox"/> Elec. Engineer	<input type="checkbox"/> Mechanical Draftsman <input type="checkbox"/> Telephone Engineer <input type="checkbox"/> Elec. Lighting Supt. <input type="checkbox"/> Mechan. Engineer <input type="checkbox"/> Plumber & Steam Fitter <input type="checkbox"/> Stationary Engineer <input type="checkbox"/> Civil Engineer <input type="checkbox"/> Build'g. Contractor <input type="checkbox"/> Architect/Draftsman <input type="checkbox"/> Architect <input type="checkbox"/> Structural Engineer <input type="checkbox"/> Banking <input type="checkbox"/> Mining Engineer
Name _____	
Street and No. _____	
City _____	State _____

Tell the substitutor: "No, thank you, I want what I asked for. Good-bye."

Cookies, Ginger Cakes and Jumbles—are *so much* better made with Karo.

Karo is a pure and wholesome syrup that blends naturally with other foods. It makes the best sweetening for sauces, pies and puddings.



Karo

CORN SYRUP

Eat it on
Griddle Cakes
Hot Biscuit
Waffles

Use it for
Ginger-Bread
Cookies
Candy

★Send your name on a post card for Karo Cook Book—fifty pages including thirty perfect recipes for home candy-making.

CORN PRODUCTS REFINING CO.
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The Hartford Fire Insurance Co.

does the largest fire insurance business in America. Popularity comes from strength and fair treatment. For fire protection

Ask for a Hartford Policy

Any agent or broker

BARODA DIAMONDS Flash Like Genuine
ANY STYLE
at 1/40 the cost—IN SOLID GOLD RINGS
Stand acid test and expert examination. We guarantee them. See them first—then pay.
Special Offer—14k Tiffany ring 1 ct. \$5.98.
Gents ring 1 ct. \$4.98. 14k Steel 1 ct. \$4.98. Sent C.O.D. for inspection. Catalog FREE, shows full line. Patent ring gauge included, 10c. The Baroda Co., Dept. A-6 535 N. State St., Chicago

Remoh Gems
Looks like a diamond—wears like a diamond—brilliance guaranteed forever—stands filing like a diamond—stands heat like a diamond—has no paste, foil or artificial backing. Set only in solid gold mountings. 1-30th the cost of diamonds. A marvelously reconstructed gem. Not an imitation. Sent on approval. Write for our catalog, it's free. No cash advance. REMOH JEWELRY CO., 433 N. BROADWAY, ST. LOUIS.

Necco SWEETS



Are Good for Everybody



They make their appeal to all ages. Children like them because they taste good—the older people like them for the same reason and also because they are so wholesome and healthful.

So good in fact, that they are sold only under the NECCO seal. Try LENOX CHOCOLATES as a sample of the goodness of them all.

At leading dealers everywhere.

NEW ENGLAND CONFECTIONERY COMPANY, BOSTON, MASS.

Tell the substitute: "No, thank you. I want what I asked for. Good-bye."



Custards, creams, puddings—your home desserts are bound to be right if you use Kingsford's and follow the book.

Kingsford's Corn Starch

has been the stand-by of experienced cooks for generations.

Successful housewives from nearly every State in the Union tell us how they use Kingsford's to improve their cooking. You'll find the recipes in our remarkable little Cook Book "E"—

"What a Cook Ought to Know About Corn Starch," with 168 of the best recipes you ever tried.

Mail a post card today. We'll send the book free.

T. KINGSFORD & SON
Oswego, N. Y.
NATIONAL STARCH CO.
Successors



30,000 MILES Through Europe, Canada and Mexico

A lady in Indianapolis writes, "Daggett & Ramsdell's Perfect Cold Cream is the only PERFECT one. I have used it for years with great satisfaction. It cleanses the skin perfectly and leaves it soft, with no sensation of greasiness. I consider it a necessity when traveling and have carried it with me more than 30,000 miles,—through Canada, Mexico and all over Europe. Put up in tubes it is a marvel of safety, lightness and compactness, as well as excellence. However limited my trip, a tube of Daggett & Ramsdell's Perfect Cold Cream is always included." (Name on request.)

DAGGETT & RAMSDELL'S PERFECT COLD CREAM

"The Kind That Keeps,"

Is a perfect skin cleanser. You can prove this for yourself. Wash your face with soap and water. Then spread Daggett & Ramsdell's Perfect Cold Cream on a hot wet cloth, and wipe the surface you have just washed. The cloth will be black with dirt. This experiment demonstrates the limitations of soap and water, and proves the efficiency of Daggett & Ramsdell's Perfect Cold Cream. It is essential to a dainty woman's toilet—very refreshing and soothing. It clears the complexion, heals chaps, and prevents roughness and premature wrinkles. Each year it is more evident that "The touch of time falls lightly on the face that is massaged daily with Daggett & Ramsdell's Perfect Cold Cream." Sold everywhere. Traveler's Tubes, 10c. up. Jars, 35c. up.



SAMPLE MAILED FREE

Including Booklet, "Beware the Finger of Time," with illustrated lessons on how to massage. Ask your dealer for *Violette Rico* a new toilet water of rare quality.

DAGGETT & RAMSDELL, Dept. F., D. & R. Building, NEW YORK



Tell the substitutor: "No, thank you, I want what I asked for. Good-bye."

**SHIPPED
KNOCK
DOWN**

BROOKS

**EASILY
PUT
TOGETHER**

BOATS

GUARANTEED TO BE SATISFACTORY

YOU WANT A BOAT

Build It Yourself and Save Two-thirds

WE will furnish you with all the parts of a boat machined, cut to shape, and accurately fitted together prior to shipment, so that with a little labor on your part you can own your own boat at a price that is ridiculously low, or we will furnish you with instructions and full sized paper patterns, from which you can build a boat, by purchasing the material locally.

You want to know how it can be done? Then send today—not tomorrow—for **Our New Catalogue No. 24—It's Free**—The exceedingly low prices will amaze you.



For the year 1910 we have made the enormous cut of 33 1/2 per cent from our regular prices—just one-third less than they were last year.

Do you know that local boat builders all over the country purchase our frames—build the boats and sell them at a handsome profit? You can do this yourself and save that profit. Anyone can put our knock-down boats together—no skill is required. The work is a clean, instructive form of recreation—a mighty good thing for you or your boy.

We save you (1) the boat builder's profit; (2) labor expense; (3) big selling expense; (4) seven-eighths the freight.

Our Guarantee is that you will be perfectly satisfied with everything you purchase of us, or your money will be instantly refunded.

Brooks Manufacturing Co.
1404 Ship St.
Saginaw, Mich., U. S. A.
Originators of the Pattern and Knock-Down System of Boat Building. Established 1901.

YALE RIDERS HAVE THE BEST OF IT in speed, endurance, economy and through reliability of their mounts.

**1910
3 1/2 H. P. \$200**



The Yale team (3 riders) won the Chicago Motorcycle Endurance Contest and Silver Trophy Cup, July 9-10-11, '09. 600 miles averaging 20 miles per hour—vibrator, carburetor, battery box and spark plug sealed. A perfect score—not one adjustment!

Sworn statement of upkeep cost in 1909 shows average of less than 50c for all repairs from misuse, neglect and accidents.

RIDE A YALE—THEY NEVER FAIL

The Yale Twin Cylinder, 6 1/2 H. P. \$300.
(We also build Yale and Smell Bicycles.)

Write today for complete specifications—don't think of buying until you see them.

IMMEDIATE DELIVERIES—AGENTS WANTED
THE CONSOLIDATED MFG. COMPANY
1719 Fernwood Ave., - Toledo, Ohio, U. S. A.

MULLINS STEEL BOATS ARE SAFEST AND FASTEST

THEY KEEP AFLOAT in the heaviest weather because the hull is made of pressed steel plates with air compartments like a lifeboat. THEY KEEP AHEAD of all other boats of equal H. P. because the smooth steel hull offers little resistance to the water, and they are equipped with the new Mullins Engine that is absolutely reliable under all conditions. Can't backfire, will not stall at any speed. **STARTS AND RUNS LIKE AN AUTOMOBILE ENGINE.** Every Mullins Boat is guaranteed to give perfect satisfaction.

Row boats, Hunting and Fishing Boats, and Marine Engines.

W. H. MULLINS CO., 325 Franklin St., Salem, Ohio, U. S. A.

Send for our Handsome Boat and Engine Book, Mailed FREE



Just like a 30-Footer only smaller.

Do not think of Buying a Launch or Engine until you see our Handsome Book WHICH EXPLAINS FOUR WONDERFUL LAUNCH BARGAINS

Only \$121 for this complete 16-ft. Launch (Special Bargains in WECO - 3 H. P., guaranteed self-starting Engine, weedless and Wheel Rudder. Result of 20 years' experience. Money back if not as represented. Write for free catalog today.

Special proposition to agents for a limited time only.

C. T. Wright Engine Co., 2801 Canal Street, Greenville, Mich.

10 DAYS FREE TRIAL

We will ship you a "RANGER" BICYCLE on approval, freight prepaid, to any place in the United States without a cent deposit in advance, and allow ten days free trial from the day you receive it. If it does not suit you in every way and is not all or more than we claim for it and a better bicycle than you can get anywhere else regardless of price, or if for any reason whatever you do not wish to keep it, ship it back to us at our expense for freight and you will not be out one cent.

LOW FACTORY PRICES We sell the highest grade bicycles direct from factory to rider at lower prices than any other house. We save you \$10 to \$25 middlemen's profit on every bicycle. Highest grade models with Puncture-Proof tires, Imported Roller chains, pedals, etc., at prices no higher than cheap mail order bicycles; also reliable medium grade models at unheard-of low prices.

RIDER AGENTS WANTED In each town and district to ride and exhibit a sample 1910 "Ranger" Bicycle furnished by us. You will be astonished at the wonderfully low prices the liberal propositions and special offer we will give on the first 150 sample going to your town. Write at once for our special offer. **DO NOT BUY** a bicycle or a pair of tires from anyone at any price until you receive our catalogue and learn our low prices and liberal terms. **BICYCLE DEALERS**, you can sell our bicycles under your own name plate at double our prices. Orders filled the day received. **SECOND HAND BICYCLES**—a limited number taken in trade by our Chicago retail stores will be closed out at once, at \$3 to \$8 each. Descriptive bargains list mailed free.

TIRES, COASTER BRAKE rear wheels, inner tubes, lamps, cyclometers, parts, repairs and everything in the bicycle line at half usual prices. **DO NOT WAIT**, but write today for our Large Catalogue beautifully illustrated and containing a great fund of interesting matter and useful information. It only costs a postal to get everything.

MEAD CYCLE CO. Dept. R-110 CHICAGO, ILL.

Tell the substitute: "No, thank you, I want what I asked for. Good-bye."



Boston Garter

Velvet Grip

Boston Garters are made of best materials in a clean factory, by well-paid help. Every pair warranted—penalty, a new pair or your money back.



BOSTON GARTERS

RECOGNIZED THE STANDARD, AND WORN THE WORLD OVER BY WELL DRESSED MEN.

Sample Pair, Cotton, 25c. Silk, 50c. Mailed on Receipt of Price.

GEORGE FROST CO. MAKERS
BOSTON, MASS., U.S.A.

See that BOSTON GARTER is stamped on the clasp.



A YEAR To PAY 875

Open Account Credit—the credit that is so much appreciated by the best families in Chicago—is now offered to you no matter where you live or what your salary or position may be. It's credit of the highest character—thoroughly dignified and pleasant—won derfully generous and helpful. You enjoy the full use of the furnishings while paying for them. All transactions are held strictly confidential. No security required. No charge for credit—no interest—no extras of any kind.

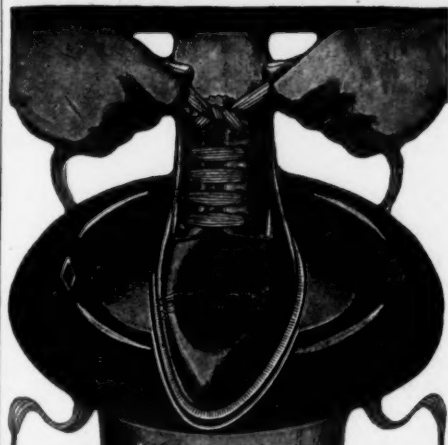


50¢ PER MONTH
MISSION TABLE AND LAMP 8.75
One of our thousands of bargains—Mission Library Table in solid oak, weathered finish, top 36x24 in. Lamp 24 in. high, cathedral shade 12x12 in., set with beautifully colored glass; fully equipped for burning oil, gas or electricity (state preference); all tubing, wires and fittings included. Lamp and Table complete \$8.75. Terms \$1.50 cash, 50c month.

Catalog No. 55 Free

Our big new Catalog tells all about this most generous credit plan. Write for it today. It is an immense volume, handsomely illustrated in colors, quoting factory prices on everything to furnish and beautify the home—Furniture, Carpets, Rugs, Curtains, Stoves, Pianos, Crockery, Silverware, Clocks, Pictures, Sewing Machines, Go-Carts, Refrigerators, etc., etc. Write for this big catalog at once—write for it today.

Hartman Furniture & Carpet Co.
Dept. E3 223 to 229 Wabash Ave., Chicago, U.S.A.
Largest, oldest and best known home-furnishing institution in the United States—established 1855—55 years of success—22 big stores—over 700,000 customers—capital and resources greater than any similar concern in America. Satisfaction or money refunded.



DIAMOND FAST COLOR EYELETS

in your shoes are a guarantee against "brassy" eyelets, that cheapen the appearance of the shoe.

Diamond Fast Color Eyelets retain their bright, new appearance even after the shoe has worn out. They are the only eyelets made with tops of solid color and

Can't Wear "Brassy"

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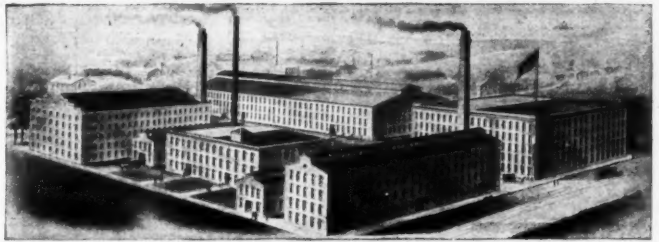
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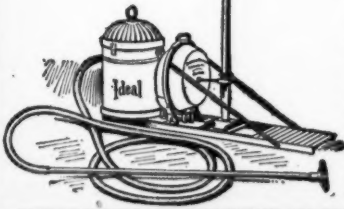
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I Will Help You to Health—Good Figure— Rested Nerves

By Assisting Nature in a Scientific Manner

IN the privacy of your own room, surprise your husband and friends. After my university course, I concluded I could be of greater help to my sex by assisting Nature to *regain and retain* the strength of every vital organ, by bringing to it a good circulation of pure blood, by strengthening the nerves, and by teaching deep breathing, than I could by correcting bodily ailments with medicines.

I have helped over 44,000 women. I can help you to **Arise to Your Best** giving to you that *satisfaction with self* which comes through knowledge that you are developing the sweet, personal loveliness which health and a wholesome, graceful body gives—a cultured, self-reliant woman with a definite purpose, which makes you the greatest help to family and friends. You will be a **Better Wife, a Rested Mother, a Sweeter Sweetheart.**

I can help you to make every vital organ and nerve do efficient work, thus clearing the complexion and correcting such ailments as
 Constipation Irritability Indigestion Weak Nerves
 Colds Dullness Rheumatism Nervousness
 Weakness Sleeplessness Torpid Liver Catarrh

This work is done by following simple directions a few minutes each day in the privacy of your own room. In delicate cases I co-operate with the physician.

A Good Figure is Economy and means more than a pretty face

I have corrected thousands of figures as illustrated. Style is in the figure and poise and not in the gown. The gown in Fig. 1 cost \$250; the one in Fig. 2 cost \$5. Fig. 2 is the same woman as in Fig. 1, developed and in correct poise. Figs. 3, 4, 5 and 6 show actual photographs of pupils before taking up my work. (They have given me permission to use them). They all stand, now, as correctly and appear as well as Fig. 2. When every organ of the body is doing efficient work, there will be no superfluous flesh and no bony, angular bodies. I have reduced thousands of women 80 lbs., and have built up thousands of others 25 lbs. What I have done for others I can do for you. Here are a few extracts from daily reports of my pupils:

"My weight has increased 50 pounds." "My kidneys are much better." "I have not had a sign of indigestion or gall stones since I began with you." "I weigh 112 lbs. less and have gained wonderfully in strength. I never get out of breath, the rheumatic twinges have all gone, and I look and feel 15 years younger." "Just think of it! To be relieved from constipation. Entirely free after having it for 50 years." "Have grown from a nervous wreck into a state of steady, quiet nerve."

Write me today, telling your faults of health and figure. If I cannot help you, I will tell you so. I study your case just as a physician, giving you the individual treatment which your case demands. I never violate a pupil's confidence. I will send you an instructive booklet, showing correct lines of a woman's figure in standing and walking, free.

SUSANNA COCROFT, Dept. 84, CHICAGO
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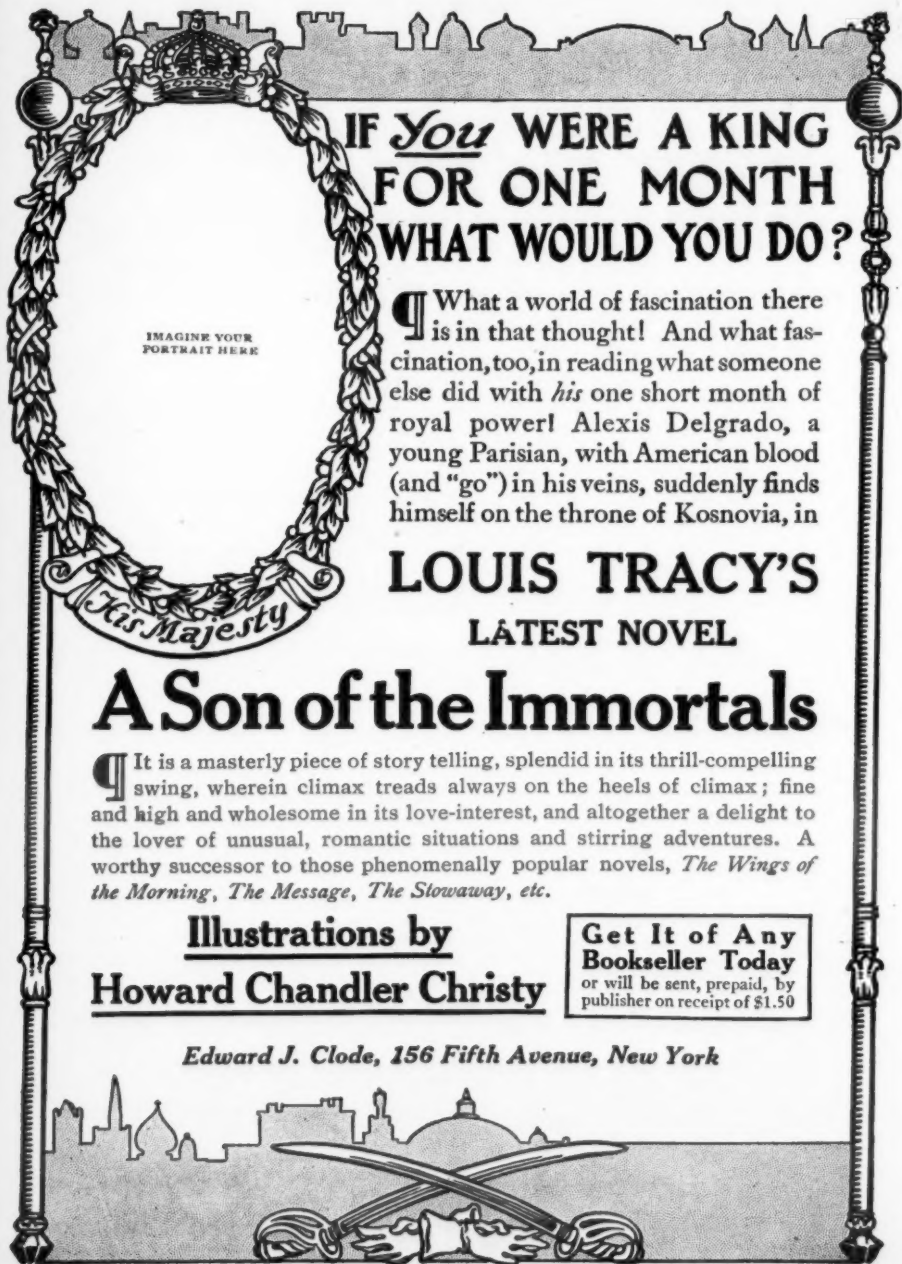


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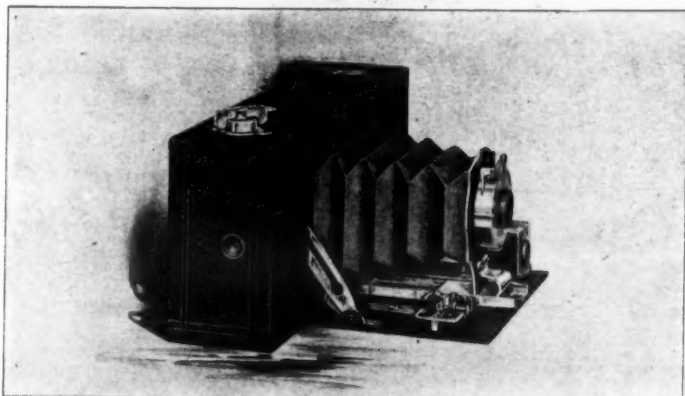
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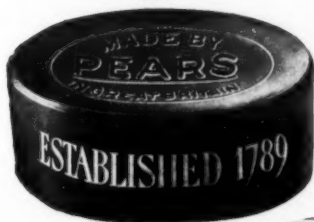


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